

BFI

APRIL 2013 VOLUME 23 ISSUE 4

THE INTERNATIONAL FILM MAGAZINE

Sight & Sound



**"ALL THE DARK STUFF THAT WE COULDN'T PUT
INTO THE OLYMPICS HAS ENDED UP IN 'TRANCE'"**

DANNY BOYLE

PLUS

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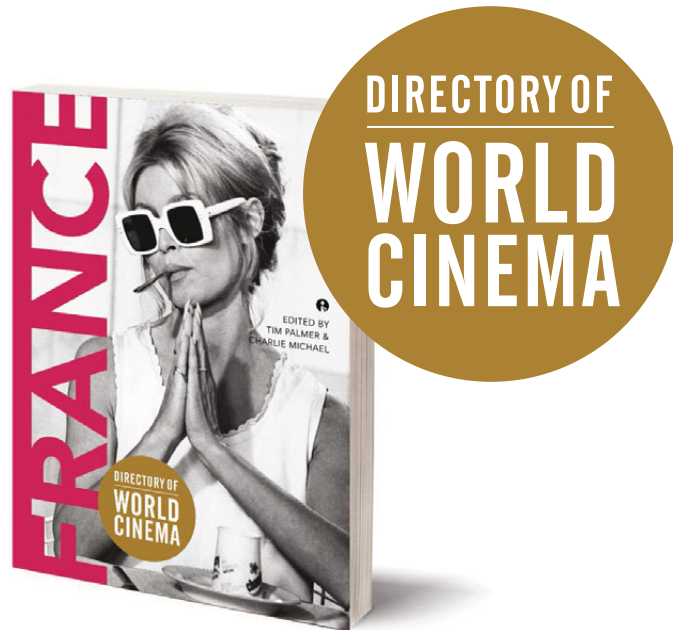
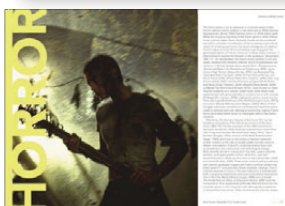
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Directory of World Cinema: France

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Artistic, intellectual, and appreciably avant-garde, the French film industry has, perhaps more than any other national cinema, been perennially at the centre of international filmmaking. With its vigorous business and wide-ranging film culture, France has also been home historically to some of the most influential filmmakers and movements – and, indeed, the very first motion picture was screened in Paris in 1895.

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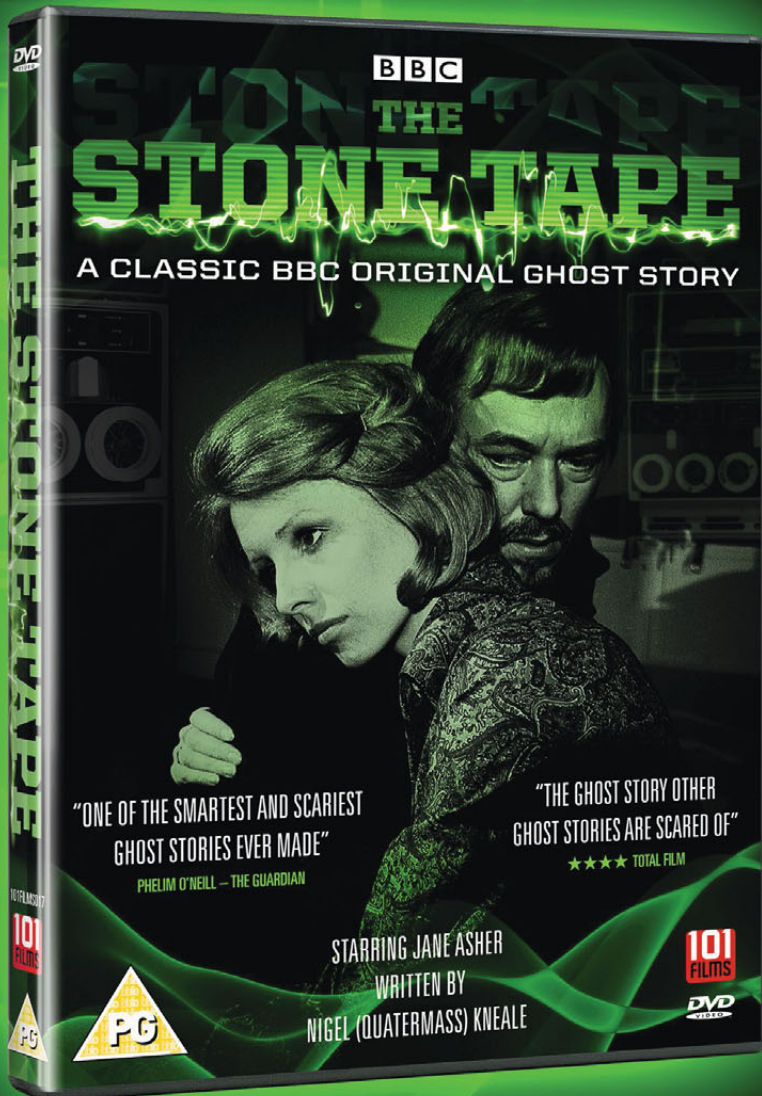
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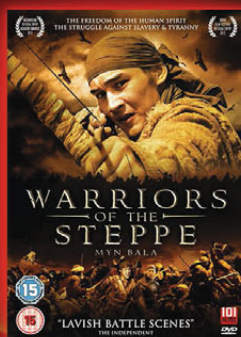
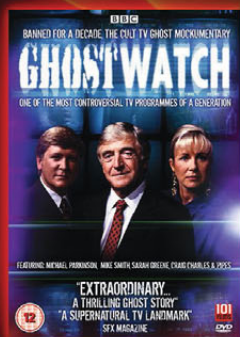
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What it says on the tin, so to speak, is that we are 'The International Film Magazine' – and this month we're more so than usual. The image above shows artists painting an enormous billboard in Mumbai in 1980, as we celebrate 100 years of Indian cinema with a survey of the country's unique art of film-poster design (see p.54). Our *S&S* interview is with Danny Boyle (p.60), whose Olympics opening ceremony encapsulated Britishness for the world

– and whose biggest hit is *Slumdog Millionaire*. We track the career of the quintessentially 'franglophile' actress Kristin Scott Thomas (p.32); debate Mexican director Carlos Reygadas's *Post Tenebras Lux* (p.50 and p.74); talk to the Romanian Cristian Mungiu about *Beyond the Hills* (p.42); examine Chilean debut *Thursday till Sunday* (p.46); and report from an upbeat Berlinale (p.24). We're not saying, "We are the world", just "World cinema is us." **Nick James**

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Ben Walters programmes BURN: Moving Images by Cabaret Artists, as part of the London Lesbian & Gay Film Festival

COVER

Danny Boyle photographed by Neale Haynes/Contour by Getty Images, retouched by DawkinsColour

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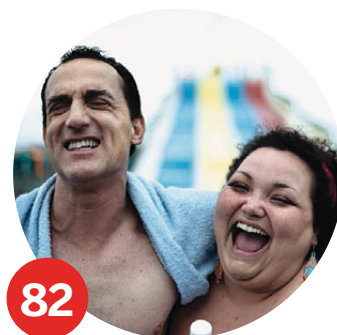
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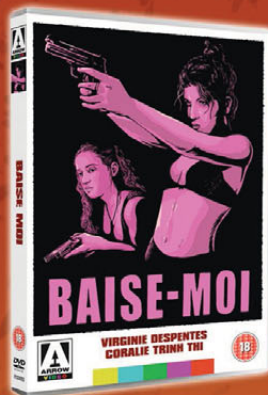
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Editorial Nick James



QUANTITATIVE CLOGGING

One significant trend of this year's Berlin Film Festival (see also p.24) was that each of the sections – Competition, Out of Competition, Panorama, Forum etc – was programmed to bursting point. Never has it been so difficult to get a sense of all that was shown in Berlin, partly because the competition felt more vital than usual (and therefore harder to roam away from) but also because it seemed like all the sections were fighting each other to get more films in, simply because they could. And they could, of course, because with the availability of cheap HD cameras, there's just so much more cinema around.

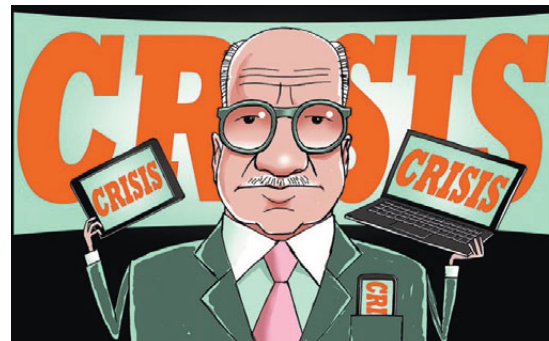
Berlin aside, this general glut of films has many repercussions. It makes films seem less significant (as per Steven Soderbergh's complaint, quoted in this space last month). It's also hard to filter through such a mass of new material. As Geoffrey Macnab discusses this month (see p.20), small distributors keep popping up in the UK with new films to fight over the ever-smaller slice of the cake that is 'specialist film'. Enthusiasts writing for free online are so legion that nearly every new film gets advocacy from someone, and this feeling that there's praise for everything creates the illusion that criticism is valueless. As a result, criticism continues to come under fire from many quarters, as Indiewire's Matt Brennan has noted.

The broader question of what all this adds up to has been given new impetus by writer-director Paul Schrader, who is claiming that there's been "a total systemic change in the definition of a motion picture". His statement, made at the Cartagena Film Festival in Colombia, was in part a bullish riposte to a much-discussed recent *New York Times* article about the seemingly chaotic making of *The Canyons*, his new film starring Lindsay Lohan.

In the light of the mild ridicule to which the article subjects him, Schrader's statement can be seen as an effort to restore his damaged credibility. "Today," he says, "we're in a greater crisis [than the 1960s crisis of content]... a crisis not of content but of form. We don't know what movies are anymore. We don't know how long movies are, how we watch them... we're entering into the post-theatrical era."

Schrader is certainly right to suggest that, with the variety of platforms, consumers and critics find it easier now to relax the boundaries of what they

Writer-director Paul Schrader is claiming that there's been "a total systemic change in the definition of a motion picture... We don't know what movies are anymore"



might consider 'counts' as cinema – and that can only be a good thing. And though the implication of the *New York Times* article is that *The Canyons* can't be any good because its making was so troubled, I'm as sure as the tradition of *films maudits* allows me to be that it may have its charms and in due course find its defenders. Yet at the same time I can't help but feel that the subtext of Schrader's rhetoric is a form of special pleading: if the theatrical era is over, then the standards of that era no longer apply, and so to compare *The Canyons* to, say, *Casablanca* or *Chinatown* would be inappropriate.

But what is really so different? Anyone who's read David Bordwell's *The Way Hollywood Tells It* will find it difficult to refute his argument that, despite all the technological changes since D.W. Griffith pulled together basic film grammar, stories continue to be told on film in much the same ways. No one can blame Schrader for trying to boost the chances of a sexual thriller shot on a budget of \$250,000, but does he really think (as *Screen International* reports) that watching Whitney Houston's funeral on his computer with her music videos streaming to one side and a live Twitter feed on the other has anything to do with cinema? That's enhanced television at best, and no matter how far we are down the line of convergence, we're nowhere near reaching a conclusion as tragic as that. The glut of cinema, however various, must continue to be critiqued and assessed according to the highest standards we know.

Sir Denis Forman (1917-2013)

We were saddened to learn of the death last month of former BFI Director Sir Denis Forman, who went on to become a significant force in British television. Forman took charge of the BFI in 1949, aged only 31. He helped establish the National Film Theatre in 1952, and brought in such editorial staff as Gavin Lambert, Penelope Houston and Lindsay Anderson to run *Sight & Sound* and the *Monthly Film Bulletin*. Forman left the BFI in 1955, but his legacy endures to this day. ☺

IN THE FRAME

POWER DRESSING



Female trouble: the drag artiste born Glenn Milstead is the subject of the documentary 'I Am Divine'

The liberating power of cross-dressing is a recurring theme at this year's London Lesbian & Gay Film Festival

By Ben Walters

"I love it, I love it already," says Bette Bourne, trying on a new outfit at the beginning of Jeremy Jeffs's and Mark Ravenhill's *Bette Bourne: It Goes With the Shoes*. It's one of a number of documentaries in this year's BFI London Lesbian & Gay Film Festival dealing with ideas of acting and *acting* – how certain kinds of performance and presentation, on screen or in person, can constitute social or political agency, or how the assumption of a role can imbue performative agency.

When Bourne says those words, the pioneering member of the Gay Liberation Front and experimental queer performance troupe Bloodlips isn't trying on a chichi gown or jacket but academic garb ahead of a ceremony at the Central School of Speech and Drama. Its conspicuous yet sober glamour endows him with institutionally bolstered potency. For Bourne and his cohort, as for Quentin Crisp before them, being seen in public in 'effeminate' clothing and asserting their right to an 'abnormal' sexuality were also ways of exercising power. "When I first put on a dress," Ravenhill quotes him as saying, "it wasn't so I could pretend to be a woman. It was to discover a new type of man."

When Divine did it, it was for a different reason. "He never wanted to be a woman," says his regular co-star Mink Stole in Jeffrey Schwarz's *I Am Divine*, a portrait of the notorious beauty who, as John Waters's 300-pound muse, starred in *Pink Flamingos*, *Female Trouble*, *Polyester* and *Hairspray*. "Are you kidding? No, he wanted to be a movie star. There's a difference!" As a teenager in the early 1960s, Glenn Milstead had tried drag – an Elizabeth Taylor look in keeping with the drag-ball scene of the time, which was predicated on the idea that conventional glamour was available to anyone with the right wardrobe and costume, regardless of the body underneath.

But "they were so serious they made it



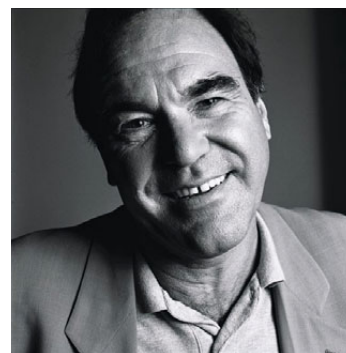
Chronicle of a Summer

A seminal influence on the cinéma vérité movement, Jean Rouch's 1960 documentary (right) is now coming to UK DVD and Blu-ray for the first time, courtesy of the BFI. The dual-format disc is released on 13 May.



Oliver Stone

Oliver Stone (right) and Peter Kuznick discuss their new documentary series and book 'The Untold History of the United States' on 3 April at Senate House, University of London. The event includes a screening of one episode of the series, a Q&A and a book signing. Tickets are £3.50, available from stonekuznick.eventbrite.co.uk





Mark Ravenhill and Betty Bourne

ridiculous,” thought Milstead, who was in any case self-conscious about his bigger figure. It was when, with Waters’s encouragement, he embraced his size and an honest if cartoonishly over-the-top style and manner that he became Divine – and, yes, a star. “Mobs of boys would come out of nowhere,” one witness recalls. “By the way he looked and the way he talked, it kind of made it OK for them to be who they were.”

Different outfits bring different power. In Joe Balass’s *Joy! Portrait of a Nun* we meet Sister Missionary P. Delight, a Catholic seminarian turned founding member of the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, the San Francisco-based troupe of performers and activists who since 1979 have been fusing genderfuck drag and the trappings of holy orders in the name of sexual liberation and social justice.


The immediate effect of these outrageous bearded nuns, brandishing huge homemade phalluses and preaching sexual happiness, is of course carnivalesque. “We were ghetto clowns,” as Sister Que Sera wrote in the *Sentinel*. But to co-opt certain forms of dress and behaviour subversively is not automatically to sacrifice the agency inscribed in them. In some of the most film’s most striking moments, members of the order press the idea that its hijacking of Catholic forms was sincere as well as satirical, serving a cathartic purpose in particular for



‘Joy! Portrait of a Nun’

members of the gay community alienated from the ritual life in which they grew up.

“The concept was not ‘drag-queen nuns’,” as one sister puts it. “I met people who wanted to cry and weep and hold a religious person in their hands,” says another. “It was a joke, but they wanted a sister in their life, like a real nun, to be able to take in their confidence... They wanted to love a nun.” AIDS, it need hardly be said, made the value of this function all the more evident.

Bourne, Divine and the Sisters have all shown how far simple queer presence can go in disrupting normative assumptions. To varying degrees, they have also shown how irreverent performance can help effect socio-political change. But for one of the most iconic instances of performance as political agency, let’s turn to the Biblical story of Salome, the dancing girl who got the head of a foe on a silver platter. Charles Bryant’s 1923 take on the story, inspired by Aubrey Beardsley’s illustrations and rumoured to have had an all-queer cast, also plays in the festival, as does Avery Willard’s glamorous drag version, filmed behind closed doors. The lethal glamour of the original femme fatale retains its allure. 

i The 27th BFI London Lesbian & Gay Film Festival takes place at BFI Southbank from 14 to 24 March

ANATOMY OF A MOVIE IN THE HOUSE

25%	Theorem (1968)
15%	Harry, He’s Here to Help (2000)
15%	Lolita (1962)
12%	Plein Soleil (1960)
10%	Strangers on a Train (1951)
8%	Desperate Housewives (2004-12)
6%	Rear Window (1954)
5%	Swimming Pool (2003)
2%	Deconstructing Harry (1997)
2%	Finding Forrester (2000)



QUOTE OF THE MONTH ROBERTO ROSSELLINI

“The camera’s a ballpoint pen, an imbecile; it’s not worth anything if you don’t have anything to say.”



Bird’s Eye View Film Festival

This year’s festival focuses on women filmmakers from the Arab world, with screenings including ‘Wadjda’ (right), Saudi Arabia’s first feature directed by a woman. 3-10 April, various London venues.



Brigitte Bardot

To coincide with the publication of regular S&S contributor Ginette Vincendeau’s new book on on Bardot, published by BFI/Palgrave Macmillan, Ciné Lumière in London screens a short retrospective of BB’s films from 14-21 March.



Bradford Film Festival

This year’s festival includes much that will interest S&S readers: the UK premiere of Peter Schreiner’s ‘Fata Morgana’ (right), a focus on Russian maverick Alexei Balabanov and a celebration of 100 years of Indian Cinema. 11-21 April. See www.nationalmediamuseum.org.uk/BradfordInternationalFilmFestival



ROADSIDE MOVIE

A lonely garage in the Highlands is the setting for *Shell*, a striking feature debut from writer-director Scott Graham

By Isabel Stevens

Passing by remote garages on the long drive between Glasgow and his home in the north of Scotland, Scott Graham was drawn to write a film around such a location – “a place that people are tied to, where they help others with food and fuel, help them move on with their lives, while not moving on with their own”. But in the resulting 2010 short *Native Son*, Graham didn't quite feel he told “the heartfelt story about isolation” that he wanted to.

This led him to develop his debut feature *Shell*, which focuses on the repressed longings of the titular 17-year-old protagonist (Chloe Pirrie), who is living with only her withdrawn father Pete (Joseph Mawle) for company since her mother ran out on them, scraping a living out of the few customers who frequent their run-down petrol station. Graham's intimate domestic drama boasts excellent performances and takes full advantage of the sights and sounds of its bleak and epic hinterland setting.

IS: The landscape of the Highlands is framed at the start and the end through a windscreen. But throughout ‘Shell’ we never leave the petrol station. I like the description of the film as a ‘roadside movie’.

SG: Shell and Pete can't express what they're feeling, so the isolated and lonely landscape in the film says a lot about their relationship. I'm drawn to films and filmmakers that do that.

I wanted to set up that *Shell* was a road movie, but then stay in one place. It's not just a romantic idea that you could be that isolated. You can live 50 or 60 miles from a local town in the Highlands. I wrote scenes where Shell leaves the petrol station, but they didn't hold my interest in the same way. Although the film never leaves the garage, I wanted to create a sense of momentum – the anticipation of leaving or of someone coming.

IS: Petrol stations often figure in cinema, from action to arthouse films, including Lenny Abrahamson's ‘Garage’ (2007).

SG: *Garage* was relatively recent, so I deliberately avoided it. There's a great moment in *Vanishing Point* [1971] where Kowalski drives from one state to another and stops at a petrol station. It's a wordless scene. A woman comes out and fills up his car and he drives off. But we stay with her, with her face after the car's left. There's a sense of longing in her expression. And then we never see her again.

I knew it might be quite limiting, but I was interested in how much you would learn about people's lives in that short time, or in that same moment repeated on a regular trip. A life like that is extremely limiting for the characters, but for a writer, it's really rich.

IS: How did you find the location itself?

SG: We drove all round the Highlands trying to find a garage we could adapt or rent. In the end we found lots of scrap and old signs and then got

permission to build on an empty lookout point. Building it meant that we could plan out how we were going to photograph each scene. The most important element was a long stretch of empty road where Shell could walk to the edge and see what was coming from one way, and a bend obstructing the view from the other side.

I deliberately wanted a sense of timelessness. Shell is very much growing up in her father's world, in one he created with her mother. I made sure their house is full of things a woman might have chosen but that have now dated and faded.

IS: You deliberately keep Shell and Pete's relationship ambiguous at the start.

SG: I hate tricks in cinema, but I like ambiguity and space to make up my own mind. All of that had to come from what the two looked like physically – as both a father and a daughter and as a couple. They lived together for a week before the shoot in isolation, soaking up what it was like to be there, getting beyond that polite stage of interacting.

IS: At the start of the film they are rarely in the same shot.

SG: I wanted to introduce the fact that not only do they live in an isolated, empty place; they lead very separate lives. During the day, Shell runs the garage shop and Pete chooses to be alone in his scrapyard. All of that puts a greater burden on them in the evening. There are no street lamps. They do feel huddled in [what's] almost this little lighthouse. The first time we see them together, there's a gate between them and it looks like a cage.

IS: Did you have any particular visual

They lived together for a week before the shoot in isolation, getting beyond that polite stage of interacting


references in mind when you were shooting?

SG: Yoliswa Gärtig, our cinematographer, loves this Russian film called *Euphoria* [2006]. It's exposed in such a way that you're very aware of the exterior landscape while you are inside. Also there's the scene at the end of *Brokeback Mountain* when Heath Ledger puts the shirt away and closes the wardrobe door, and you can see the view from the window of his caravan and it looks like a picture.

I'm a big fan of 1970s American cinema and its muted colour tones. The Highland landscape is very in keeping with that. We shot in September and October, when the land becomes very greenish brown and muted. We wanted to shoot on film, but you know the reasons why everyone shoots digital now. Particularly, as we were in the Highlands we would have had to transport rushes to a lab in London and then wait to get them back before you could watch anything.

IS: You don't use much dialogue, but the sounds of the wind and lorries rattling past are very prominent.

SG: I'm wary of using music in cinema. There's so many different, incredible sounds in the Highlands which I was imagining when I was writing – the wind, the creaking garage which is like an iron dinosaur waiting to keel over and die – and I tried to treat them like music. I would almost prefer to listen to how a character's breathing changes than to hear them speak.

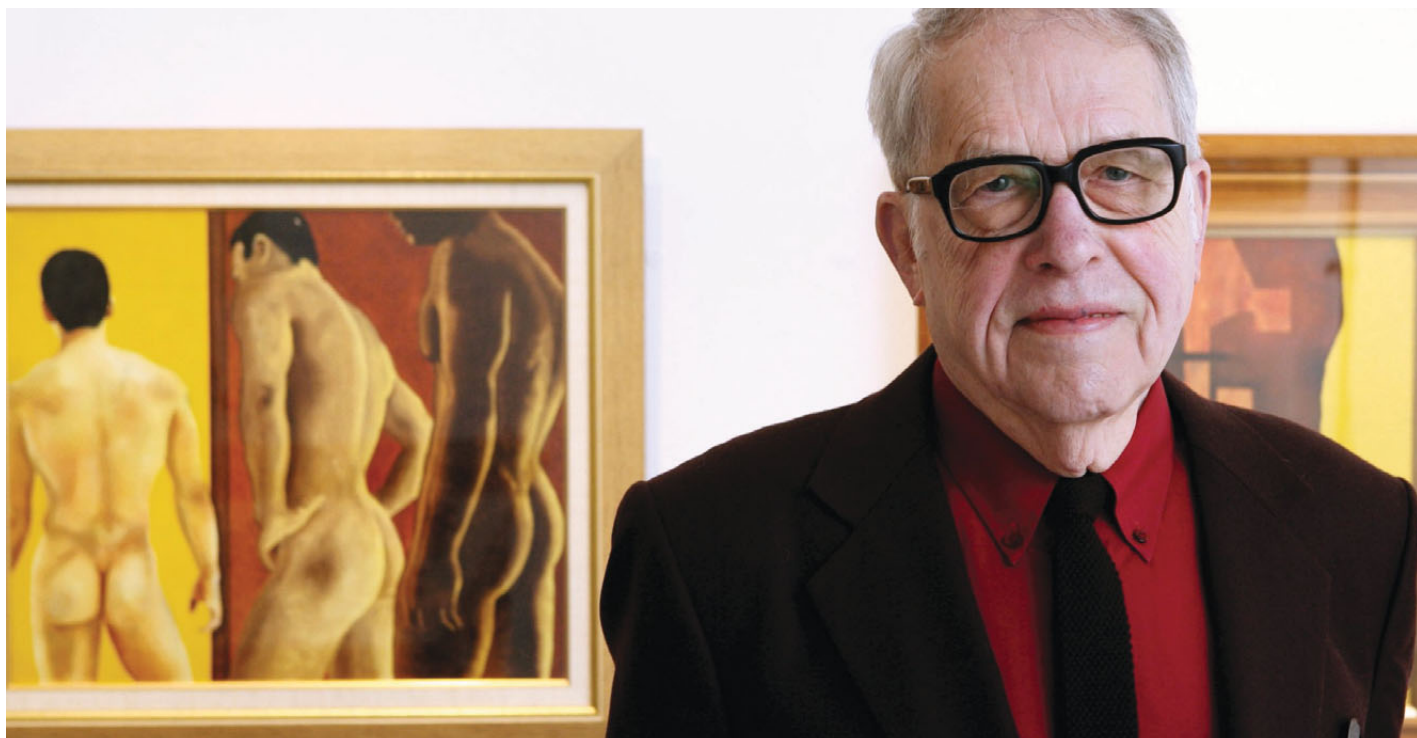
There probably is a bit more dialogue in the script than made it into the film. One thing I learned during *Shell* was that it's better to shoot dialogue and then pare it back if you need to – that's what you do when you write anyway. Dialogue is something I'm still trying to find my way with. It is a very effective way of reaching people, but I'm never going to use a lot of it – those just aren't the kind of characters I write. 

i **'Shell' is released on 15 March, and is reviewed on page 103**



Out of the fast lane: writer-director Scott Graham on location

DONALD RICHIE (1924-2013)



A trusted guide: Donald Richie did more than anyone to introduce Western audiences to the wonders of Japanese cinema and culture

By Tony Rayns

Donald Richie died in Tokyo on 19 February, just short of his 89th birthday, and it's tempting to commemorate him by simply quoting choice excerpts from *The Japan Journals: 1947-2004*, which he published in 2004. Donald arrived in Tokyo on New Year's Day of 1947 as a typist for US Forces' newspaper *The Pacific Stars and Stripes* and – with the exception of a few not-very-happy years as curator of film at MoMA in New York – lived there for the rest of his life. Older readers of *Sight & Sound* will remember him as the man who did more than anyone else to promote Japanese cinema to the rest of the world; others may recall him as one of the most astute commentators on other aspects of Japanese culture, from its 'smiling exclusion' of foreigners to its temples and full-body tattoos. But Donald's genius – it's spelt out graphically in the *Journals* – was as what the French call an *animateur*, an individual who makes things happen.

He was born in Hicksville (Lima, Ohio, to be precise) and left both the town and his family behind at the first opportunity. Japan was an accident. When he was discharged from the navy at the end of WWII, his eyes were set on Greece, or possibly Morocco, but the only appealing way of making a living that presented itself was a job with the US civil service in one of the two US-occupied nations. Japan was more enticing than Germany, and he was soon able to parlay the typing job for the newspaper into work as a writer/reporter. Ignoring the prohibition on fraternising with locals helped, of course.

Donald 'fraternised' tirelessly. Encounters with the novelist Kawabata Yasunari (a future Nobel laureate), the zen master Suzuki Daisetz and the composer Hayasaka Fumio provided

entrees into Japanese culture; meeting Hayasaka was crucial, because in 1947 he invited Donald to Toho Studio to watch *Drunken Angel* being shot and introduced him to Kurosawa Akira and the actors Mifune Toshiro and Shimura Takeshi. (Donald had never seen a film being made before, in fact had never thought much about cinema at all.) At the same time, profiting from the fact that the Japanese are at least as 'bi-curious' as any other race on earth, not to mention the fact that homosexuality was not illegal in Japan, Donald pursued his life-long cruise for both brief encounters and longer-term partners; the *Journals* are candid about such matters, although the more lubricious details have been kept back for a projected posthumous volume to be called *Vita Sexualis* – a title borrowed from the great Mori Ogai.

Some sources mistakenly credit Donald with introducing Japanese cinema to Western audiences. In fact, Kawakita Nagamasa had brought Japanese films to Europe in the late 1920s (the National Film Archive found one of his nitrate prints in Wales in the 1980s) and such directors as Kurosawa, Mizoguchi and Kinugasa began winning prizes in Venice and Cannes in the early 1950s. But there's no doubt that Donald's book *The Japanese Cinema: Art and Industry* (1959), co-written with research scholar Joseph Anderson, laid all the foundations for the West's later appreciation of a little-known cinema, or that *The Films of Akira Kurosawa* (1968) set the pattern for close

He remained the 'go-to guy' for foreign visitors to Tokyo who needed help navigating Japan's complex and hermetic society

analysis of a great talent working in an 'alien' culture. His further writings on film included several more synoptic histories, a book on Ozu (1974), notes for a study of Imamura, and hundreds of individual film reviews for *The Japan Times* and the *International Herald Tribune*. And, of course, contributions to this magazine.

Donald's passion for Japanese cinema centred on the films he 'discovered' in the 1950s and 1960s; he left the excavation of the film industry's pre-war riches to the next generation of critics, and actively avoided keeping up with developments and new talents in recent decades. His own cinephilia peaked in the 1960s, the decade in which he made a string of 'underground' shorts, often featuring his boyfriends of the time. (Six of them are collected on the Image Forum DVD *A Donald Richie Film Anthology*; the best is probably *Cybele*, from 1968, which records a scandalous piece of performance art by a conspicuously uninhibited theatre group.)

By the time I first met Donald, in the early 1980s, his private interests had gravitated more towards literature and chamber music. But until he fell ill a few years ago he remained the 'go-to guy' for foreign visitors to Tokyo who needed help and advice on navigating Japan's complex and seemingly hermetic society – not only the film scholars but also, as the *Journals* record, everyone from Truman Capote and Igor Stravinsky to Susan Sontag and Francis Ford Coppola. To some of us this charming man became a warm and loyal friend. There are many stories to tell, some a touch lubricious, but they must wait for a more fitting time. ☺

i A website has been created at which tributes to Richie can be posted. See donald-richie-tributes.jimdo.com

CANDLES IN THE WIND

From *Betty Blue* to *Short Cuts*, a birthday cake is seldom an unambiguous cause for celebration in the movies



By Hannah McGill

Those to whom Jean-Jacques Beineix's *Betty Blue* (1986) represented a seminal (ahem) crossover between the private consumption

of soft porn and the public appreciation of glossy arthouse cinema may be jarred to note that the film is now close to three decades old. The shadow it casts is long, for a work of variable critical reputation whose director's international star has waned; and it still stands as one of the most risqué films to be nominated for the Foreign Language Oscar. This year's pathologically breast-aware awards host Seth Macfarlane would have blown a fuse.

But 'nearly 30, surely not' isn't the only surprising birthday associated with *Betty Blue* (known in France by the title of Philippe Djian's source novel, *37° du matin*). When the sexually and temperamentally volatile beauty Betty, played by Béatrice Dalle, celebrates her birthday part-way through the film, it transpires that the woman we've been watching in various states of undress and coitus is a teenager: Betty is just turning 20. Dalle was a shade older, around 21; her co-star Jean-Hugues Anglade a decade older. We learn her age when Anglade's character Zorg takes her to see a piece of land that he's bought her, and presents her with a cake produced from the boot of his car. The cake is a childlike offering to a woman not long out of childhood whose appeal is unsettlingly distributed between infantile and erotic attributes. And its candles have miraculously, hazardously remained lit on the journey – reflecting the fires that Betty sometimes lights when she's upset, and all the burning passion that her tantrums and their relentless coupling can't extinguish.

Her birthday is, however, the beginning

of the end for Betty – if indeed the content of the whole film isn't basically her accelerated decline from sexual usefulness. Apparently transitioning directly from teenagerhood to imprisonment by biological clock (the process does seem a touch less abrupt in Beineix's sprawling director's cut than in the trim original), she soon becomes irredeemably enslaved by her catastrophic premenstrual syndrome and her desire to have a child. One she's gone mad enough to destroy her own looks, Zorg takes an executive decision to put her out of her misery – her light proving a little easier to extinguish than the candles on her cake. (Which, incidentally, she never gets to eat: it falls to the ground in the more pressing pursuit of an embrace.)

A more resilient and certainly more vengeful form of female madness features in Park Chanwook's new film *Stoker*, the title sequence of which shows the candles on 18-year-old India's birthday cake snuffed out by what appears to be less a cake dome than a bell jar (a symbol, to Sylvia Plath, of



'Betty Blue'



'Marie Antoinette'



'Singin' in the Rain'



Icing on the cake: Virna Lisi makes an entrance in 'How to Murder Your Wife'

oppression and entrapment, but also of defiant self-separation). India (Mia Wasikowska), with her clear wardrobe debt to Balthus's pubescent minxes, is also a girl and a woman at once. But unlike Betty, she has an appetite for food and a preference for solo sexual gratification (and unlike Betty, she survives the film).

The birthday cake stands, of course, for celebration, but also for the impermanence and perishability of that celebration, and through it the irretrievable passing of a life stage. It's deployed with unforgettable poignancy in the segment of Robert Altman's *Short Cuts* (1993) based on the Raymond Carver story 'A Small, Good Thing'. Parents Howard (Bruce Davison) and Ann (Andie MacDowell) face the wrath of Lyle Lovett's short-fused baker when they fail to collect their son Casey's birthday cake, the boy having been killed in a hit-and-run. Through the wrangle that follows, the cake itself stands as an innocent object of the baker's disproportionate wrath, and a sickly reminder of Casey's stalled future. Cake as an

The birthday cake stands, of course, for celebration, but also for the impermanence and perishability of celebration

emblem of unwholesome excess features as an indication of a Queen's naive profligacy in 2006's *Marie Antoinette* (though Sofia Coppola has her protagonist deny she ever exhorted the starving to live on it), and of a mother's deranged overprovision for her fracturing family in Neil Jordan's *The Butcher Boy* (1997).

Consuming, baking or rejecting cake: all perhaps preferable to being placed inside one as a birthday surprise – a logical step, perhaps, from the association of sexually available women with dessert ('tart' dates to the late 19th century, 'cheesecake' to the 1930s; I recall as a child, a little more recently, being thoroughly befuddled by Barry Norman commenting that in some 80s film or other Michelle Pfeiffer looked "as if you could eat her with a spoon"). The girl-in-cake trope exposes Debbie Reynolds's high-minded Kathy as a mere showgirl in *Singin' in the Rain* (1951); provides a titillating break in the relentless male-on-male violence of *Under Siege* (1992); and introduces characters played by Jack Lemmon to a multiple murder in *Some Like It Hot* (1959) and a troublesome spouse (Virma Lisi) in *How to Murder Your Wife* (1965).

The somewhat troubling undercurrents of the idea – woman associated directly with confection, sex with consumption thereof – are given full and grisly flight in *Addams Family Values* (1993), in which a cake presented to Uncle Fester (Christopher Lloyd) produces an ominous trace of smoke in place of the expected dollybird. "Lurch," Gomez admonishes his butler, "was she in there *before* you baked?" Bombshell to burnout before the birthday party's even kicked off: that's got to be the neatest possible distillation of the brief *Betty Blue* life cycle. 🍷

THE FIVE KEY...

HAROLD PINTER FILMS

The big-screen rerelease of *The Servant* this month offers a perfect cue to survey the key films written by (pause) Harold Pinter



By Philip Kemp

"What concerns me most is shape and structure," noted Pinter, which goes for his screenplays no less than for his stage plays. At their best,

the films he scripted are impeccably crafted artefacts, with dialogue where silences mean as much as words and unstated menace cruises like a shark beneath the surface of the most banal utterance. The Losey trilogy found him on top form. "He understands," Losey observed, "how often the human creature uses words to block communication."



1 The Servant (1963)

Amazingly, this was Pinter's first film as screenwriter, though he'd written extensively for television. Like director Joseph Losey, Pinter was fascinated and repelled by the British class system, charting with relish the gradual undermining of James Fox's foppish aristocrat by Dirk Bogarde's suavely insidious manservant.



2 The Pumpkin Eater (1964)

A crack cast (Anne Bancroft, Peter Finch, James Mason) draw full value from Pinter's lethally oblique dialogue in this adaptation of a Penelope Mortimer novel about adultery and betrayal among the London bourgeoisie. Bancroft's nervous breakdown in Harrods Food Hall is a highpoint.



3 The Quiller Memorandum (1966)

Pinter in le Carré territory (though the original novel's by Adam Hall), where the cryptic ambiguities of Cold War espionage fit him as snugly as a shoulder holster. George Segal's at his best as the secret-service agent in Berlin up against Max von Sydow's neo-Nazi. A pre-Smiley Alec Guinness is his controller.



4 Accident (1967)

Back with Losey again. Bogarde and Stanley Baker play callous mind games as Oxford dons with rival designs on Jacqueline Sassard's luscious student, with Michael York as collateral damage. At a Sunday supper party the cruelties and frustrated lusts uncoil beneath urbane donnish chat.



5 The Go-Between (1971)

Pinter's third and last with Losey, adapting L.P. Hartley's classic novel where "the past is a foreign country". But despite the idyllic Edwardian rural setting this is still viciously class-ridden Britain, with poisonous whispers behind the civilised clink of teacups and the thwack of ball on willow.



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OUTSIDE THE BELL JAR

In the digital age, there's nothing to stop us crossing cultural boundaries, but we need explorers to point us on our way



By Mark Cousins

John Sayles said recently that one of his films suffers from "a critical lack of Caucasians". This made me laugh. If

only we could edit Ryan Gosling or Jennifer Lawrence into the history of African film, then maybe it would attract more people to it.

Sayles's comment reminded me of an infant I saw recently in a newspaper shop. It had spotted a display of Haribos and, having obviously tasted them before and so being able to imagine their sweetness, grasped for them longingly. Ryan Gosling and Jennifer Lawrence are our Haribos. We've tasted them, we liked the taste, we want it again. When I suggest going to see a film, a member of my family always says, "Who's in it?" We live in the bell jar of our own taste, knowledge and desires.

Proof of this came recently in an article, 'The 25 Best Movie Critics of All Time', posted on www.complex.com/pop-culture, which was widely discussed and admired. There were great critics on this list, but not one from the continent that has made more films than any other, Asia; in fact, no one from anywhere east of France – no Sergei Eisenstein etc. The authors of the list reached for their Haribos. If you're inside the bell jar, such lists might seem heady and fun but, seen from outside, they are, among other things, racist by omission.

Tough talk, I know, but the Sayles-Haribo-bell-jar-racism line of thought comes about because of the recent death of the American critic and filmmaker Donald Richie, who spent most of his adult life in Japan (see obituary p.13). Richie disliked the bell jar (and maybe it disliked him back) and so became an explorer. Like Josephine Baker or T.E. Lawrence, his living instincts were centrifugal. Like the story in Homer's *The Odyssey*, he was an oar misrecognised and re-designated in a new world as a winnowing fan. As such he joins a gallery of border-crossers whose range is startling: Ida Lupino, Salman Rushdie, Paul Gauguin, Ryszard Kapuscinski, Lena Horne, Youssef Chahine, Jan Morris, Gertrude Bell, Paul Bowles, Marco Polo, Ibn Battuta etc. To mention them is to think of their gaze, their drive, their gender, sexuality, politics and curiosity. They objectified themselves and others, they built bridges of thought and story, they reversed the subject-object polarity, they looked and were looked at, they had the duality of movie stars.

There can be little doubt that, at its best, the centrifugal impulse turns life into a road movie, maybe a spaghetti junction of pathways between here and there, me and not me – and that, surely, is good. But it's worth asking: who have been the other Donald Richies in film culture? The critic David Bordwell (who,



Movie explorers try to give those of us inside the bell jar the proxy experience of travelling with them, marvelling with them

along with Kristin Thompson, has pushed film criticism beyond the borders of the known world) calls such people *animateurs*. They have been curators, collectors, archivists, historians, publishers, directors and producers. To say this is to think of Henri Langlois, P.K. Nair, Pierre Rissient, William Everson, Tadao Sato, Iris Barry, Jay Leyda and Kevin Brownlow, for starters. What we know about film has been further shaped by Nwachukwu Frank Ukadike, Tony Rayns, Nasreen Munni Kabir, Laura Mulvey, Roy Armes, Barry Salt, Martin Scorsese, Gianluca Farinelli, Abe Mark Nornes, Hamid Naficy, Tom Luddy, Manthia Diawara, Richard Dyer, Quentin Tarantino and many others. If you don't know some of these names, get googling. There are certainly many more who should be on such a list.

In the digital era we use the word portal a lot, which is relevant here because all of the above are portals, gateways beyond the bell jar. In the digital era of movie plenitude, the pathfinders aren't only people, they are publishers too: YouTube, Criterion, hundreds of film festivals (Festival de 3 Continents, Cannes, Rotterdam etc), *Sight & Sound* and small DVD labels such as London's Second Run, which has been taking us on a tour of Eastern European and Indian cinema.

But where do we go with this when the world is getting smaller and more polyvocal, and there are fewer unclimbed mountains? In the past, the movie explorer went on her or his

journey beyond the bell jar, was changed by the getting there, and wrote or programmed afterwards, having learned from that change. Nowadays explorers blog as they go. The adventure is more live. They try to give those of us who are inside the jar the proxy experience of travelling with them, marvelling with them, unravelling with them, turning into something else with them, looking back at where they came from with them. This is the potential of the digital, pointillist now. Film culture is becoming a mass of dots, voices all over the map that combine to provide some sort of picture of the movies. This is an optimistic thing to say – an observation about what could be if we allowed the online world to bring out the best of our offline selves. It follows from Le Corbusier's idea that technology is poetic.

But it's hard not to bump into those offline selves, the way you bump into the glass wall of a bell jar. I met a film fan recently, the editor of her student film magazine. She had heard of African and Middle Eastern cinema, but had never looked into it. She's busy doing her degree and doesn't have much time to find out about such films. She thought there might be some good ones. I was surprised by this. Hers is the first generation for whom there are no barriers to discovering such movies. The information is a click away – as, in many cases, are the films themselves. There's no glass in the bell jar. She doesn't know what she doesn't know, and didn't seem interested. The Haribos are so entrancing and there's nothing strong pushing her out of herself – not poverty or sexual difference or rebellion or intellectual curiosity or centrifugal force or impatience or passion or politics. These are just as animating in the digital age as they were before it.

My advice to her? Twice a week, watch a film about which you know nothing.

DEVELOPMENT TALE

PICKING UP 'GOOD VIBRATIONS'



Last night a DJ saved my life: Richard Dormer as Belfast's one-man music scene, Terri Hooley

Over 20 years after a Belfast drinking session spawned the idea, 1970s indie-music saga *Good Vibrations* hits the screen

By Charles Gant

Back in 1992, when Glenn Patterson was about to publish his second novel *Fat Lad*, Granada TV asked him to author a documentary as part of its *Celebration* series, travelling between the two cities – Belfast and Manchester – that had formed twin poles in his life. It was while filming in Belfast at the record store of local legend Terri Hooley, and listening to more of his stories in the bar afterwards, that inspiration struck. “I remember leaving the bar thinking, ‘If I’m going to do a movie, this would be it,’” Patterson recalls. So began a 20-year journey that would eventually yield the feature film *Good Vibrations*, named after the shop that Hooley first opened in Belfast in 1978, in contravention of all accepted wisdom and common sense,

on a street known locally as ‘Bomb Alley’.

Nothing happened for a few years until Patterson, who was writer in residence at Queen’s University Belfast, saw some short fiction by undergraduate Colin Carberry. The two became friends, and decided to collaborate on a screenplay. Their focus would be Hooley – a hippie-generation DJ who stood in defiance of sectarian battle lines, embraced the local punk scene, became a promoter and manager and set up the label that released The Undertones’ ‘Teenage Kicks’.

There followed a period of what Patterson calls “intense research – it involved a lot of very late nights at my house, having repaired there from various bars around the town, sitting talking to Terri, getting the stories, trying to get as much as we could of the times, going back to the 1960s. Terri would go home,” Patterson continues, “and then late at night I would hear the fax machine. I would go down in the morning and the hallway would be completely awash with fax pages, as Terri had decided there was something else

he’d meant to say.” There was interest in the project from Film4, but when in 1999 it came to contracts needing to be signed, Hooley got cold feet. “We weren’t writing it to please Terri,” says Patterson. “At the same time, it was the *Good Vibrations* story, and we didn’t want to be proceeding if he wasn’t happy with the whole set-up. So we just set it aside. As far as we were concerned, unless Terri was keen on reviving it, we couldn’t do anything about it.”

The project was rescued thanks to the intervention of local band Snow Patrol. Drummer Jonny Quinn had worked in *Good Vibrations* at one point and the band all knew Carberry as he contributed to local music magazines. In 2007, the band’s singer Gary Lightbody heard about the long-dormant screenplay and began wondering if he could help get it made. The two writers looked at what they had and decided to get a second opinion from their friend Lisa Barros D’Sa who, unbeknown to them, had recently formed a film company with her husband Glenn Leyburn and musician David Holmes.

Suddenly there was interest in the film; adding further weight to the team, Derry-born Andrew Eaton, long-time producer partner of Michael Winterbottom, also signed on, as did Belfast-based producer Chris Martin.

Crucially, Hooley was now happy to proceed. "What was different between 1999 and 2007," Patterson explains, "was that most of the people who were now involved were living and working in Belfast. The film industry in Belfast had developed considerably and it was possible to develop a project there. There was respect and familiarity. Terri was delighted with that."

With Barros D'Sa and Leyburn, who were about to make their debut feature *Cherrybomb*, attached as directors, the writers worked on a draft funded by Northern Ireland Screen and the Irish Film Board. The UK Film Council's New Cinema Fund, under Lenny Crooks, was enthusiastic, and provided funding for

Research involved very late nights at my house, having repaired there from various bars, sitting talking to Terri

shooting a few sample scenes, which suddenly necessitated the discovery of a lead actor to play Hooley. The filmmakers turned to local talent Richard Dormer. "His name had come up before because of his brilliant performance as Alex Higgins in *Hurricane*, the one-man show that he wrote," says Patterson. "He's always been someone we thought would be good. But the sampler really confirmed that. As soon as you saw him do it, you couldn't imagine anybody else in the role."

Changes at the UKFC saw the departure of Crooks and a parting of the ways. Next to get involved was Film4, who had been linked, under different leadership, to the earlier attempt to make the picture in the late 90s. "We developed a few drafts with them," says Patterson. "They were very keen. Finally there was maybe a sense that creatively they didn't quite see the film the same way we did. It was amicable enough." Luckily Steve Wright of BBC Northern Ireland, who had always been aware of the project, was able to bring it to the attention of Joe Oppenheimer at BBC Films in London. "We did a couple more drafts of it, but once we landed there, we felt we were all talking about the same film in the same way," says Patterson.

Throughout the process, discussions had always taken place about whether *Good Vibrations* was a youth-culture film about a charismatic maverick or a drama set against the turmoil of the Northern Ireland Troubles. "The political context was always approached warily," says Patterson. "I never thought it was a film about the Troubles. It's a film about a man who does something extraordinary – something that is unremarkable anywhere else and extraordinary in the circumstances that he found himself." 📌

i 'Good Vibrations' is released in the UK on 29 March, and is reviewed on page 91

THE NUMBERS NO

By Charles Gant

Network Releasing made its very first foray into theatrical distribution with Pablo Larraín's 'Tony Manero', and then handled his follow-up 'Post Mortem', so the UK outfit was well placed to acquire the Chilean director's latest effort, 'No'. Making a rare buy at script stage, Network managing director Tim Beddows enthusiastically signed on for the real-life drama about the anti-Pinochet campaign during the 1988 referendum in Chile. There have been no regrets. "The moment we saw it, we knew it was going to be commercially head and shoulders above Pablo's previous films," he says. "There were so many aspects of the film we could play on, we were spoilt for choice in terms of how to pitch it."

The original plan was to follow up October's BFI London Film Festival premiere with a late 2012 release, but with star Gael García Bernal unavailable until late January, 'No' was pushed to early February, a time when arthouse cinemas are congested with Oscar pictures. It was a gamble – although the film did pick up an Oscar nomination for foreign-language picture – and, with crucial support from the Curzon chain and regional film theatres, the distributor was rewarded with an opening weekend of £49,000 from 15 sites, plus £8,000 in previews, a higher total than the entire UK runs of 'Tony Manero' and 'Post Mortem' combined.

Network partnered with Amnesty International on the film, launching a "No to impunity" campaign that, combined with Bernal's star cachet, proved catnip to the media. A picture of the actor holding a placard with the slogan made the cover of national daily freesheet 'Metro', and he appeared live on 'Channel 4 News' and 'Newsnight' the same evening. "This is the most successful publicity campaign the company has ever run," says Beddows. "Gael worked really hard and was worth every penny."

Eyebrows were raised in the industry when 'No' ended up playing one-off screenings in



Gael force: Bernal is in four of the top ten below

the Picturehouse chain's Discover Tuesdays slot in the first week of release. While Network would certainly have preferred proper week-long engagements, 'No' achieved takings of £12,000, the highest of any of the 51 films participating in the slot to date, and has scored follow-on bookings at multiple Picturehouse sites. After 17 days of play, the film's gross stood at an impressive £228,402.

Films booked into UK multiplex chains must retain an exclusive four-month theatrical window, but with little interest from those exhibitors, Network opted to experiment with a two-week video-on-demand platform with Curzon and iTunes, which at press time was set to begin on 8 March. With £32,000 from the British Film Institute's Distribution Fund aiding marketing for this initiative, it will be an interesting test. The irony is that these alternative approaches resulted not so much from Network's relentless quest for innovative models, but more as a response to lukewarm support from the exhibition sector for a highly appealing film. 📌

LATIN AMERICAN CINEMA AT UK/IRELAND BOX OFFICE

Film	Year	Gross
The Motorcycle Diaries	2004	£2,711,477
City of God	2003	£2,372,951
Y tu mamá también	2002	£1,621,560
The Secret in Their Eyes	2010	£776,655
Amores perros	2001	£769,190
Maria Full of Grace	2005	£696,122
Central Station	1999	£678,663
Bombón el perro	2005	£446,913
Sin nombre	2009	£277,096
No	2013	£228,402*

*still on release

IN THE SWIM

The UK distribution sector is in a state of flux, with companies coming and going, and new opportunities in pay TV

By Geoffrey Macnab

The UK has a thriving and crowded theatrical distribution sector, but one currently in an unusual state of turbulence. As the numbers suggest, the sector is extremely lopsided. Last year, the top ten distributors (the six studios and the top four leading independents: eOne, Lionsgate, Momentum and Entertainment) had a 95.2 per cent share of the theatrical marketplace.

In 2012, 127 separate suppliers released films in UK cinemas. That means 117 companies were left to fight for 4.8 per cent of the overall market. A total of 646 films were released in 2012. The top ten distributors were responsible for 250 of these.

Given that the annual theatrical market for the UK is worth more than £1 billion, there are still millions of pounds to be fought over by the smaller indies who released the other 396 films. But 127 companies is a greater number of suppliers than ever before, notes Mark Batey, chief executive of trade body the Film Distributors' Association. "Half of those are just releasing one title each," he points out. "Part of what is going on is a symptom of the digital marketplace. If you've got a title you can bring to market and show some support behind, you have as much chance of booking a screen or two as anyone else."

The contradictory nature of the marketplace has been underlined by the convulsions in the sector over the past 12 months. Revolver, founded by Justin Marciano in 1997 and among the most belligerent of the smaller UK indies, has been struggling. The company, which enjoyed a notable success last year with *The Imposter*, has been laying off staff. Nick Taussig and Paul Van Carter, who produced films through Revolver's in-house production company Gunslinger, have left to set up their own production company. At the time of writing, Revolver isn't releasing new films in British cinemas. (Marciano didn't respond to a request for a comment about the future direction of the company.)

In 2011 another bigger player, Icon Film, also withdrew from UK distribution. In January 2013, major international company eOne completed the acquisition of Alliance Films. As part of the deal, Alliance's UK distribution company Momentum (which released *The King's Speech*) was folded into eOne, a new 'super indie'. Reactions to the merger have been mixed: some see it as a sign of the sector's strength, with eOne buying a vibrant competitor

If you've got a title and can show some support behind it, you have as much chance of booking a screen as anyone else



after an exceptional year at the box office spearheaded by *The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn – Part 2*. Others lament the disappearance of Momentum as a standalone distributor.

At the same time as some companies have struggled and others have merged, new entrants have rushed into the market. German-owned Koch Media is now planning to release 25 features a year into British cinemas, starting with thriller *Arbitrage* and the new version of *Red Dawn*. Arrow, previously specialising in video, has been releasing bigish arthouse films into UK cinemas, among them Thomas Vinterberg's *The Hunt*. Meanwhile new distributor Day For Night, handling smaller arthouse films, has been making its first theatrical releases.

In theory, the UK is a treacherous market for distributors. "It is a high-cost, low-margin marketplace. Rentals are relatively low, media costs are relatively high. Theatrical is buoyant and robust, but the whole of home and mobile entertainment is still very fluid," says Batey, pointing to the problems of video retailers such as HMV and Blockbusters. While younger consumers may embrace the many new online services available, for older consumers, he says, "the fact you can't pop into a store on a high street and pick up a DVD will have a depressing effect on the market."

At the recent European Film Market that runs alongside the Berlin Film Festival, UK distributors were out in force bidding for such properties as *Untitled Hugh Grant* and *Blood Sisters: Vampire Academy*. The fear is that arthouse and independent fare will become harder to see in British cinemas. Then again, with well more than 100 companies still releasing films in the UK, it's hard to argue that there's a problem with under-supply.

On an optimistic note, indie distributors are relishing the fact that broadcaster Sky's iron grip on pay TV at last seems to be loosening. In the past these distributors would bemoan the fact that Sky had output deals with the studios, but rarely if ever showed non-mainstream fare. Now, thanks to Netflix, LoveFilm et al, distributors have new opportunities to sell their wares to home consumers. ☺

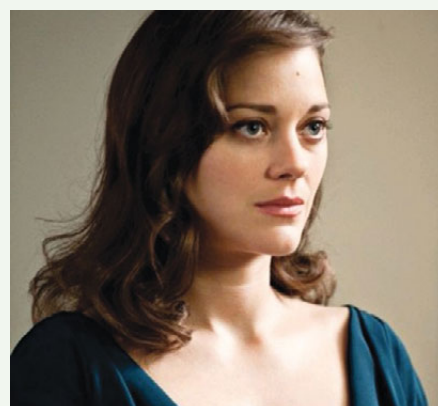
IN PRODUCTION

● **Walter Hill** is at work on a remake of Robert Aldrich's 1962 classic 'What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?'. Hill is working with Aldrich's daughter Adell on the project. He told 'Film Comment' that in his version Blanche and Jane, originally played by Joan Crawford and Bette Davis, will be younger and will both have active sex lives. "Baby Jane" is a story about violent confrontation," the director says, "which is what I've done for a living for the past 40 years."

● **Paul Greengrass** is to make 'Captain Phillips', a docudrama about a ship's captain and his crew who are taken hostage by Somali pirates. The film, based on a real-life April 2009 incident, will star Tom Hanks. Greengrass is also reportedly to make 'Memphis', about Martin Luther King's final days and assassination.

● **David O. Russell** has cast Jennifer Lawrence in his forthcoming 'The Ends of the Earth', a romantic drama by 'Argo' writer Chris Terrio, based on a true story. Lawrence will play socialite Lydie Marland, the niece of oil tycoon Ernest Marland, who adopted her when his destitute brother was unable to look after her. After his sibling passed away, the 54-year-old Ernest annulled the adoption and married the 28-year-old Lydie.

● **Justin Kurzel**, director of 'Snowtown', is in discussion with Mads Mikkelsen and Ralph Fiennes to join Ewan McGregor in 'Our Kind of Traitor'. Adapted by Hossein Amini ('Drive') from the John le Carré novel, it follows an English couple who get mixed up with a Russian money-laundering oligarch (Mikkelsen) when he seeks protection from UK intelligence in return for information about his criminal activities. They are soon positioned between the Russian Mafia and the British Secret Service, neither of whom they can trust. Fiennes will play Hector Meredith, a UK government fixer.



● **Marion Cotillard** (above) has signed on for 'Deux jours, une nuit', the new film by the Dardenne brothers. The story centres on Sandra, who has one week to convince her work colleagues to turn down their bonuses so that she can keep her job. Production begins this summer in Belgium. Cotillard is also in negotiations to take the lead in an adaptation of Octave Mirbeau's classic 'The Diary of a Chambermaid' by French director Benoît Jacquot ('Villa Amalia').

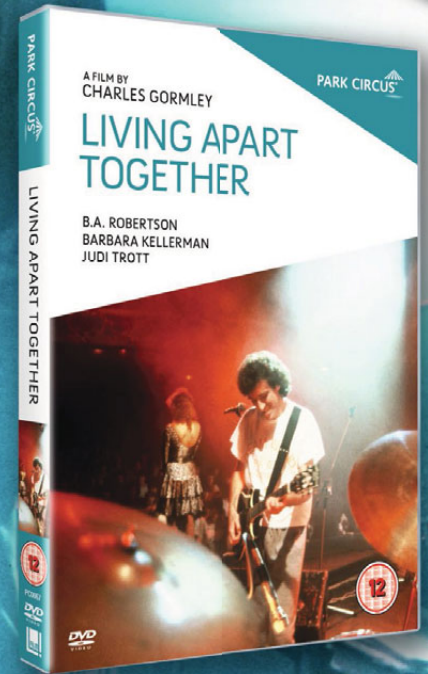
LIVING APART TOGETHER

Long lost for years, this charming 80s Scottish comedy and debut directorial feature from Charles Gormley (*Heavenly Pursuits*) has now been digitally restored.

Starring satirical post-punk musician BA Robertson, *Living Apart Together* represents an important record of a culturally significant time in the city of Glasgow.

Packed with cameos from the likes of Peter Capaldi, James Cosmo and John Gordon Sinclair, *Living Apart Together* is a bittersweet take on relationships and remains a fresh and captivating insight into how our actions affect the people we love.

AVAILABLE FROM 25 MARCH ON DVD



CLASSIC LOACH

Three early titles from the award-winning master of social realism, including *Looks and Smiles*, never before available on DVD in the UK.

AVAILABLE FROM 18 MARCH ON DVD



ONIBABA

[The Demoness] a film by Kaneto Shindō

Kaneto Shindō, one of Japan's most prolific directors, received his biggest international success with the release of *Onibaba* [The Demoness].

SPECIAL FEATURES:

- Gorgeous new 1080p HD transfer • Full-length director's audio commentary by director Kaneto Shindō and the stars of the film, Kei Satō, and Jitsuko Yoshimura • Video introduction by Alex Cox • 8mm footage (40-minutes) shot on location by lead actor Kei Satō
- Optional English subtitles • Original theatrical trailer • Production stills and promotional art gallery • 36-page booklet.

"Onibaba graphically illustrates that brutality, art and allegory can co-exist to spellbindingly powerful effect." —Film4



The Masters of Cinema Series

All three titles available on Blu-ray for the first time in the UK
La città delle donne and *La Poison* also available on DVD.

A surrealist tour-de-force, Federico Fellini's epic 1980 fantasia introduced the start of the Maestro's delirious late period.

SPECIAL FEATURES:

New HD restoration of the film • Newly translated optional English subtitles • *A Dream of Women* (31-minute documentary) • *Notes on City of Women* (61-minute documentary) • *Dante Ferretti: A Builder of Dreams* (22-minute documentary) • A 12-minute video piece with filmmaker Tinto Brass discussing the picture • Original Italian and French theatrical trailers • 44-page booklet.

One of the great late period films by Sacha Guitry — the total auteur who delighted (and scandalised) the French public and inspired the French New Wave as a model for authorship.

SPECIAL FEATURES:

Beautiful new HD restoration of the film • Newly translated optional English subtitles • *On Life On-Screen: Miseries and Splendour of a Monarch*, a 62-minute documentary from 2010 that explores the film, Sacha Guitry, and Michel Simon • 24-page booklet containing a 1981 piece on the film by Bettina Knapp; 1957 reflections on the film by François Truffaut; the words of Sacha Guitry and Michel Simon; and rare archival imagery.

LA CITTÀ DELLE DONNE

[CITY OF WOMEN]



a film by
**SACHA
 GUITRY**

*la
 poison*



All titles released 25th February 2013

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TODD YELLIN

Meet the man in charge of product innovation at Netflix, the company that's changing the way we consume films

By Nick Roddick

"Nobody knows anything." William Goldman's sardonic summary has haunted the movie business for 30 years, despite the fact that, since the very start, the American film industry has gone to great lengths to amass as much information as possible before making and/or releasing a film.

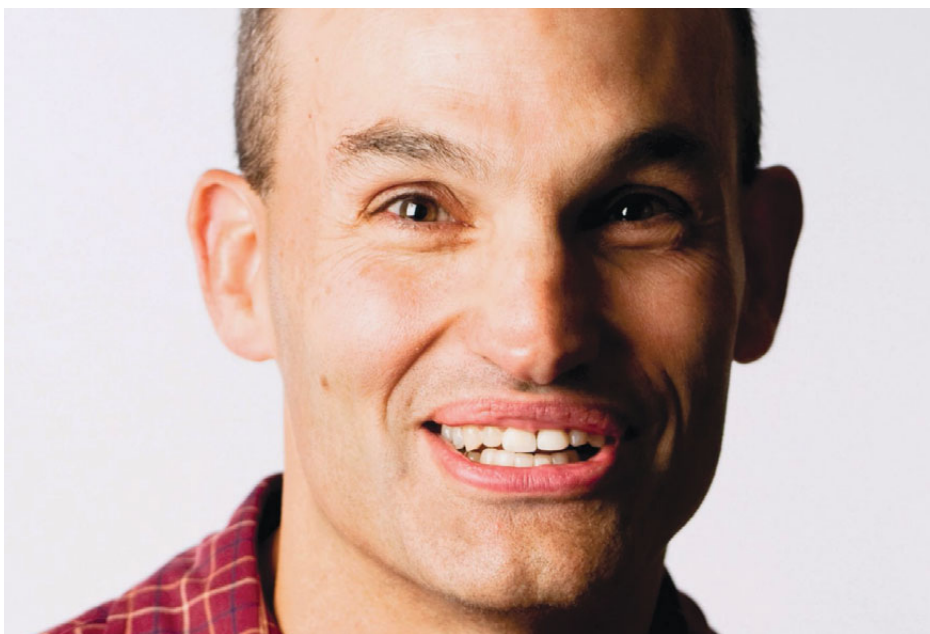
Studio files from the 1930s are crammed with feedback from cinema owners, whose comments on audience taste were carefully weighed by production chiefs. More recently, an industry has grown up in Los Angeles to track public awareness and predict potential opening-weekend figures for a film – often, it has to be said, with depressing accuracy. Hollywood may not know anything, but it seems to know what we want.

Which brings us to Netflix, the latest business plan with ambitions to become a cultural phenomenon. It too relies heavily on subscriber intelligence. Or, as Netflix's vice-president of product innovation Todd Yellin would rather put it, "knowing what our members want". Founded in California in 1997, Netflix began as an order-online, ship-by-mail DVD rental business pretty much like LoveFilm in the UK. A decade later, it launched a subscription-based streaming service in the US, and in the past five years has expanded to Canada, Mexico, large chunks of South America, most of the Nordic countries and, since January 2012, the UK and Ireland. It claims a worldwide total of 33 million subscribers – sorry, members – an estimated 30 million of whom are in the US.

On 1 February this year, the company launched its first Netflix Original, a 13-part political series called *House of Cards* with a high-power (rather than all-star) cast headed by Kevin Spacey and Robin Wright, two A-list directors (David Fincher and Joel Schumacher) for the first four episodes and a reported budget of \$100 million. A second series is already in production, and two more Netflix Originals – horror-themed *Hemlock Grove* and comedy/drama *Orange Is the New Black* – are due later this year.

Admittedly, the concept of Originals brings with it a certain risk. "The film roadside is littered with the corpses of those who've tried to get into film production," says Yellin, who describes himself as "a movie guy through and through" and who was an independent filmmaker before he was recruited to Netflix in 2006. "But we have over 33 million members and growing, so we have a rough idea of what they'll enjoy; we're not going to do it right every time, but this is one part of something we're trying."

Depending on how you look at it, Netflix either has a slightly shambolic suck-it-and-see attitude towards corporate development, or is responsive enough to business results and



"A movie guy": Yellin was an independent filmmaker before joining Netflix in 2006

customer feedback to know when to stop. In the mid-2000s, for example, it branched out into theatrical distribution with a subsidiary called Red Envelope Entertainment, which lasted less than two years. In September 2011 it said it was going to hive off the US DVD-by-mail business into a division called Qwikster. A month later, following some angry member posts, it said it wasn't.

Could Netflix Originals also be short-lived? "It's one part of the strategy, but it's not a make-or-break part," says Yellin. The series has been well received, he insists. He won't give figures (Netflix rarely does), but a survey by US financial consultancy Cowen and Company two weeks after *House of Cards* launched claimed that about ten per cent of US subscribers had streamed it, watching an average of six episodes apiece. (I've watched all 13 episodes and am definitely a fan.)

What *House of Cards* does seem to confirm, however, is a continued drift away from the movies-on-demand business enshrined in Netflix's name towards an alternative method of watching TV series, and in particular to what *The New York Times* recently dubbed "binge viewing" – as in a weekend spent (duvet optional) watching an entire series of, say, *Lost*. Yellin looks unhappy when I mention binge viewing – "It sounds kind of pathological; I prefer 'marathon watching'" – and is also equivocal about the drift towards TV. "Movies are still really important to us," he insists, "but we pay attention to what our users are watching and we aim to make them as happy as possible. The UK catalogue has more than doubled since we launched and is expected to go on increasing

We're a very sophisticated dating service introducing you to someone you'll probably love – and that's a movie

in 2013. That will get us more popular content towards the head of the demand curve, but it will also get us further down the tail into what your readership might like... So, yes, foreign cinema is going to increase."

Obviously the size of the catalogue – and the preponderance of what are politely called 'library titles' – are among Netflix UK's weaknesses, currently being exploited by Sky in a cinema commercial for its new streaming service, NOW TV, that offers new films "12 months before Netflix" (albeit for £3 a month more).

That, says Yellin, is being addressed – Netflix recently signed an output deal with Disney (confirming the commitment to movies) – but is complicated by who holds what rights for which territories (the internet may be global, but the film-rights business is still defiantly territorial).

But Netflix's most powerful weapon, Yellin claims, is the information on viewer habits and tastes it has built up. These days, of course, this has nothing to do with letters from theatre owners or even specialist consultants; it's all done by computer models, and Netflix is so confident in the system developed under Yellin that it has offered \$1 million to anyone who can come up with a better one.

"These are algorithms that we're constantly testing and honing and have for years," says Yellin, "so we can put the right piece of content in front of you at the right time, leveraging an extraordinary amount of data – about how people rate titles, what they watch, how much they watch, when they watch, what devices they watch on, what kind of categories they like – with increasingly sophisticated algorithms to really predict what we'll put in front of them."

If that sounds a little Orwellian, Yellin has a gentler view. "In a way," he says, "we're a very sophisticated dating service introducing you to someone that you'll probably love – and that's a movie..." ☺

BERLIN

BEAR NECESSITIES

With the Golden Bear going to *Child's Pose*, directed by the hitherto unsung Romanian Calin Peter Netzer, this was an unusually varied Berlinale, where strong new films from Kazakhstan, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Chile more than held their own against offerings from such established festival talents as Ulrich Seidl, Wong Kar-Wai, Bruno Dumont, Richard Linklater, Jafar Panahi and Noah Baumbach. **By Nick James**

It's been a long time since a competition line-up of such consistently good quality graced Potsdamerplatz. Though no film as distinctive or groundbreaking as, say, last year's *Tabu* or 2011's *The Turin Horse* was shown at Berlin this year, and no instant classic such as Asghar Farhadi's *A Separation* (also 2011) emerged, every day brought a rewarding surprise.

A typical boost came, for instance, when Kazakh writer-director Emir Baigazin's debut feature **Harmony Lessons** (*Uroki Garmonii*) was shown. Eight days in, with the international press largely having moved on, we would usually be watching a worthy socio-political melodrama of the kind that have so often padded out the line-up in the past. Yet here was a cool-headed appraisal of brutal life in a Kazakh school, put together with near-forensic precision by a 'new voice' using non-actors. Aslan (Timur Aidarbekov) is a bright student living with his mother, conned by thug Bolat (Aslan Anarbayev) into drinking water the other boys have used to cool their private parts. He is thereafter ostracised until a new pupil arrives – Akzhan (Anelya Adilbekova) – who isn't scared of Bolat. Lessons on Darwin, Gandhi and the like contrast with the all-pervasive gangsterism that deprives pupils of their food and money, as well as Aslan's bizarre torture experiments on cockroaches. Director Baigazin clearly shares Kazakh cinema's interest in stark landscape shots and a certain mute beauty.

Also shown late was Danis Tanovic's **An Episode in the Life of an Iron Picker** (*Epizoda u životu beraca željeza*). Little about Tanovic's career so far (*No Man's Land*, *Hell*, *Shell Shock*) had prepared us for this sharp social-observation tale about a Roma couple in Bosnia-Herzegovina. When Senada suffers a miscarriage, the local hospital (some hours away) won't treat her because she hasn't got insurance; if her husband Nazif, who salvages scrap metal, can't find the 900 marks plus fee, they'll let her die. The actors here are the very people to whom this health-service nightmare

actually happened, and the reconstruction – shot as naturalistically as possible – never gets in the way of the drama of their dilemma or the conviction of their performances.

Earlier in the festival, the emphasis was on women of a certain age. With the growth of the 'grey' audience, we'll likely see many films in the near future that focus on people in their fifties and sixties, but Sebastián Lelio's **Gloria** is the first I've seen that follows a Chilean

woman of that age who's active on the singles scene. An energetic dancer and game flirt, Gloria (Paulina García, who won the Best Actress prize) handles partners and potential dates with a realistic aplomb that shields her desire for sincere affection. When Rodolfo (Sergio Hernández), owner of an amusement park, persuades her to date him, he seems a considerate, gentle lover. Though he takes many calls from his children, he claims to be recently separated from his wife. The crisis comes when he vanishes from the seaside resort he's taken Gloria to for the weekend and she, in her despair, goes on a bender. What's so refreshing about Lelio's social observation here is its subtle acuity. Rarely does a film centred on one person achieve such satisfying and consistent grace notes. And the way Pauline García performs Gloria's tiny rituals of self-preservation would win over the hardest of hearts.

Gloria would have been my tip for the Golden Bear, but the award from Wong Kar-Wai's jury went instead to Calin Peter Netzer's compelling **Child's Pose** (*Pozitia copilului*), which centres on a woman of a similar age to Gloria. Well-heeled Cornelia Kerenes (Luminita Gheorghiu) has doted on her grown-up son Barbu (Bogdan Dumitrache) so overpoweringly that he avoids her altogether, but when he kills a child in a road accident, she and her well-connected sister Carmen (Ilina Goia) move in to influence the outcome. A film straight out of the recent Romanian tradition of acute psychological realism, *Child's Pose* (an awkward translation which apparently refers to the position of the foetus in the womb) compiles a tragedy of Greek proportions out of keenly observed detail, all of which comes to a harrowing climax when Cornelia visits the family of the dead child.

It was too much for ironists that a festival whose awards are called Bears should have two films in competition in which people are caught in bear traps. One was Thomas Arslan's catastrophically self-important western **Gold**, about German immigrants pushed to the limit

BERLIN TOP TEN

1. **Frances Ha** (below) Noah Baumbach
2. **Gloria** Sebastián Lelio
3. **Camille Claudel 1915** Bruno Dumont
4. **Child's Pose** Calin Peter Netzer
5. **The Grandmaster** Wong Kar-Wai
6. **Before Midnight** Richard Linklater
7. **Paradise: Hope** Ulrich Seidl
8. **Harmony Lessons** Emir Baigazin
9. **Computer Chess** Andrew Bujalski
10. **An Episode in the Life of an Iron Picker** Danis Tanovic





'Grandmaster' flash: Wong Kar-Wai chaired the jury as well as opening the festival with his martial-arts epic, starring Zhang Ziyi

on the Klondike trail, with Nina Hoss as its impassive heroine (no, I'm not doing horse puns too). The measure of its tumbleweed dullness came at the screening when, after Nietzschean journalist Müller (Uwe Bohn) triggers the trap, the wistful carpenter (Lars Rudolph) says, "It's incredible that in all this vast wilderness a man should step on the one place where there's a bear trap." Beaten silly by pomposity, the audience roared with laughter.

There are bear traps too in Canadian Denis Côté's oblique, anti-dramatic situation play **Vic + Flo Saw a Bear** (*Vic + Flo ont vu un ours*), about an ageing lesbian just out of prison (Pierette Robitaille) who holes up in a woodland retreat with her bisexual girlfriend (Romane Bohringer), little knowing that said girlfriend has a psychopath on her trail. Other commentators thought this a small gem, but my own high hopes for this talented director were not met by the unmotivated oddball behaviour and grisly effects on display here.

Austrian moralist Ulrich Seidl's *Paradise* trilogy reached an apt if unemphatic conclusion here. Where *Love* (*Liebe*, unveiled at Cannes 2012) rubbed our faces, so to speak, in the Nigerian sex tourism of chubby matriarch Teresa (Margarethe Tiesel), and *Faith* (*Glaube*, Venice 2012) alternated awe and despair at Teresa's fervent, self-flagellating Catholic sister Annamaria (Maria Hofstätter), **Hope** (*Hoffnung*) amps up both the sly humour and the fellow feeling. Teresa's daughter Meli (Melanie Lenz), sent to a regimented fat camp, pals up with girls who seem more sexually advanced. She develops a crush on the facility's doctor (Joseph Lorenz), a leonine middle-aged man who tries gently to defuse her visits by making her swap roles with him – which only deepens her devotion. *Hope* lives up to its name, giving this often harsh triptych a pleasingly sensitive landing.

The severe tone adopted by Seidl was matched elsewhere. Always one to seek out the world's finest auteurs, Juliette Binoche has been stretching her persona in films like *Flight of the Red Balloon*, *Certified Copy*, *Elles* and *Cosmopolis*. What a surprise, then, that it's Bruno Dumont – with **Camille Claudel 1915** – who has brought the actress back to the starker kind of role that made her reputation. As the famous sculptress, confined to a mental institution by her family, Binoche is on camera, without make-up – or many lines to utter – for more than an hour. Few actors can pull off the performance of thought without speaking or gurning, but Binoche manages it magnificently. Camille's anguish fluctuates with her sympathy for her fellow inmates and her intrinsic sense of superiority (the sculptress thought herself a genius); surrounded by much more disturbed inmates (played by real inmates), she is hounded by the idea that she could be mad. Dumont, too, shows uncharacteristic restraint, here relying on the simple, beauty of buildings, landscape and natural light to convey the intense, sculptural way that Camille looks at the world. Of course, he is still Dumont, and so the preaching has to start, and it duly arrives with the supremely self-righteous Paul Claudel (Jean-Luc Vincent),

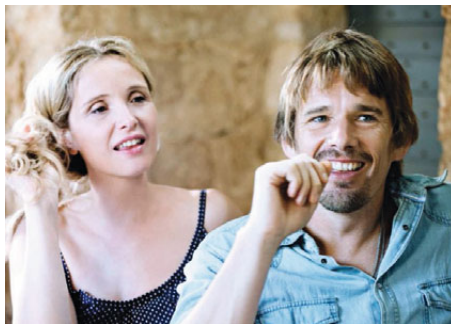


'Harmony Lessons'

'Harmony Lessons' is a cool-headed appraisal of brutal life in a Kazakh school, put together with near-forensic precision

a man whose religious convictions will make sure his sister never leaves the asylum. I can't pretend it isn't hard going at times, but *Camille Claudel 1915* is probably Dumont's best film yet.

Would that **The Nun** (*La Religieuse*), Guillaume Nicloux's routine adaptation of Denis Diderot's feverish anti-clerical sexual-repression potboiler, had one jot of Dumont's intensity. All that marks this film out from average costume drama is an uncharacteristically over-the-top performance from Isabelle Huppert as a 17th-century Mother Superior desperate for caresses and kisses from Suzanne Simonin (Pauline Etienne), the put-upon heroine whose family have confined her to the religious life against her will. Malgoska Szumowska's **In the Name of...** (*W imię...*) also pursues repressed sexuality among Catholics who've dedicated themselves



'Before Midnight'

to God. A rural home for young offenders in Poland is run by Father Adam (Andrzej Chyra) and his lay assistant Michal (Lukasz Simlat). Convincing scenes of what life is like for these boys give way to simmering homosexual tensions with the arrival of a new, flagrantly gay, tough kid, Adrian (Tomasz Schuchardt). Szumowska's portraiture and mood-setting are excellent, but it doesn't add up to anything we haven't seen before.

Songs of experience

It was at Berlin in 2004 that I first saw Richard Linklater's terrific *Before Sunset*. At the time I hadn't seen his earlier *Before Sunrise*, where Celine (Julie Delpy) and Jesse (Ethan Hawke) first met in Vienna before parting after one night together; but *Before Sunset*, where they meet in Paris nine years later at a reading of the book Jesse wrote about their first encounter, still blew me away with its seamless walk-and-talk idea of how romance flowers. This approach to filmmaking relies on a fragile charm, so it's all the braver of all concerned to make **Before Midnight**, the 'Songs of Experience' (if you will) third part, portraying Celine and Jesse after they've been married for eight years and have raised twins together. The location this time is Greece, where Jesse has been resident on a writers' retreat, and the context is Jesse's anguish at being so far from the son he has with his first wife (whom he married between the time periods of the first two films).

If *Before Midnight* has one weakness it's that Linklater leaves the talk tap running all the time, even though married couples don't usually communicate with each other so incessantly. There's a long scene of them wandering towards the beach through ruins explaining backstory stuff no long-term couple

would need to recount. Maybe Linklater should have found the courage to let that scene run without them saying very much at all. But never mind, because what makes *Before Midnight* at the least the equal of the other parts is its scarily accurate last half-hour, when a piercingly hurtful, compromise-ridden argument breaks out, of a kind you rarely if ever see in the cinema. It'll have veterans of long-term relationships everywhere simultaneously squirming and laughing at its accuracy.

Another veteran of the US indie scene, Gus Van Sant, reteams with actor Matt Damon for **Promised Land**, one of the director's more stylistically straightforward mainstream works with a political issue attached: the dangers of fracking – the process by which shale gas is extracted from layers of rock deep beneath the ground. Damon and Frances McDormand play respectively Steve Butler and Sue Thomason, colleagues charged with buying up shale-gas rights from on-their-uppers farmers; John Krasinski (who co-wrote the script with Damon) plays eco-warrior Dustin Noble, out to inform local communities of the dangers. The film does an excellent job of exploring the issues fairly, but Damon's character is fatally undermined by inconsistency. One minute he's super-sharp, the next a dumb-ass, here a good ol' boy, there a cultural sophisticate. 'Hard to read' is part of his huckster persona, but the film twists him implausibly to its dramatic uses.

A more fiery farmer drama is Boris Khlebnikov's **A Long and Happy Life** (*Dolgaya schastlivaya zhizn*). This single-minded film about a single-minded man is an emotionally complex, Chekhovian tale of divided loyalties among the inhabitants of a squatter farm, whose 'owner' Sascha (Alexander Yatsenko) is refusing to take government compensation for relinquishing the land to a buyer. Sascha is young, feels responsible and is sleeping with the government bureau chief's PA, but instead of exploring the shifts in his instinct and feeling, as well as those of his dependents, the film merely portrays him regressing into a tragic tunnel vision that never feels anything more than petulant.

Iran's Deputy Culture Minister Javad Shamaqdari was quick to criticise the Berlinale



'Camille Claudel 1915'

for giving the Best Screenplay award to an Iranian film made without the government's permission: Jafar Panahi's **Closed Curtain** (*Pardé*). And sadly, since the festival ended, Iranian authorities have gone further, confiscating the passports of co-director Kamboziya Partovi and actress Maryam Moghadam – both of whom attended Berlin – so they won't be able to support the film abroad in future. Like *This Is Not a Film*, Panahi's latest is confined to a single building, in this case a beachside holiday home inhabited at first by a screenwriter seeking the muses

A single-minded film about a single-minded man, 'A Long and Happy Life' is an emotionally complex, Chekhovian tale

and a dissident woman on the run from the police. These, however, turn out to be figments of Panahi's own imagination; after a while Panahi himself takes over residency on camera. This inventive but not altogether successful film has three scenes in which people walk into the sea – from which can be inferred both suicidal thoughts on the director's part and the authorities' clear desire for him to leave. Since I want Panahi to be able to work wherever and whenever he chooses, it would feel too much like bad manners to critique the film further in this report.

I have a hunch I would have got a kick out of David Gordon Green's **Prince Avalanche** and its dumb-ass men-at-work road-improvement shtick had I not been sitting near someone who laughed so piercingly at every remark from the very start that I missed half the dialogue. The best thing I can say is that I want to see it



'A Long and Happy Life'



'Promised Land'

again. A schedule clash meant that I could only watch the first 45 minutes of Andrew Bujalski's **Computer Chess**, but by the time I had to go it had already established its potent nerd charm with meticulous low-tech recreation of a 1980s conference competition for computers that play chess. Amusingly peculiar males (and one female), given to hapless puzzlement and conspiracy theories, ponder many arcane things. I particularly enjoyed the cameo appearance of my US film-critic colleague Gerald Peary as Henderson, the chess master whose job it is to beat the winning computer.

Seamy bohemians

I'm not a fan of biopics, generally preferring a documentary about the subject, but what fascinated me about **The Look of Love** – Michael Winterbottom's enjoyably unsleazy portrait of Soho strip-club baron Paul Raymond (Steve Coogan) – is what it felt it could get away with given that Raymond's heirs have such enormous wealth. The film's focus moves from Raymond's relationships with his wife Jean (Anna Friel) to his infatuation with his model girlfriend Fiona Richmond (Tamsin Egerton), and then to the tragedy of his beloved daughter Debbie (Imogen Poots), who becomes entangled in his seamy bohemian world. Much is made of prodigious sexual and narcotic appetites, but we get little sense of how Raymond came to dominate the erotica market in London, a tough business which presumably required occasional recourse to tough means.

There's not much wrong with Pia Marais's **Layla Fourie** except for its too-contrived set-up. Take a black African woman, the titular Layla (Rayna Campbell), with a young son in tow, who wins a job at a casino as a polygraph-machine operator. Have her accidentally run over an elderly white man, who dies before she can get him to hospital so she has to dump the body. Have her then interview a man for a casino driving job, who turns out to be the victim's son. Have another employee of the casino be the one who steals something from the dead man's crashed car. Already the number of coincidences feels implausibly high, and there are more – which is a pity because, once the set-up is in place, this becomes a fascinating insight



'Computer Chess'

into modern South African tensions around status and employment, strong on atmosphere.

As you can see, the Berlinale's headline titles inspired cautious, qualified praise. But I've saved the worst and the two best films for last. In a festival in which men were most often depicted as an endangered and somewhat hopeless species, the opening image of **The Necessary Death of Charlie Countryman** might have been emblematic: Shia LaBeouf hanging upside down with his face mashed to pulp. But the film is such an appalling confection of stereotypes about women and gangsters in Bucharest that you can only hope necessary death comes swiftly to the film itself.

If violence was what you wanted, you could find no more exquisite yet evasive a depiction than Wong Kar-Wai's **The Grandmaster** (*Yi dai zong shi*), which opened the festival in the out-of-competition slot. The director's sumptuous saga of kung-fu schools goes all out for an operatic-romantic aesthetic that de-emphasises violence in favour of rain spatters off a straw hat and the whoosh of ornate slippers on a polished floor. The action – often more like ice-skating than combat – spins out from the town of Foshan, home to modest master Ip Man (Tony Leung), until northern master Gong Baosen (Wang Qingxiang) arrives to challenge the best of the southern masters. Ip Man is chosen, and

Once the implausible set-up is in place, 'Layla Fourie' becomes a fascinating insight into modern South African tensions

the battle becomes an intellectual challenge that he unravels to his opponent's satisfaction. Gong Baosen's daughter Gong Er (Zhang Ziyi), mistress of another technique, confronts Ip Man for her family's honour, but this whole world of tradition is soon blown away by the Japanese invasion and consequent political turmoil (the story stretches from the 1930s to the 50s).

Having arrived at the festival with seconds to spare before the screening started, I found myself in the front row beneath a huge screen. What struck me most was the gossamer-thin focal depth deployed here by Wong and his cinematographer Philippe Le Sourd. Only parts of the cast's gorgeous faces are ever pin-sharp; only one in a row of icicles all ready to fall. The interplay of surfaces and shadows is, if anything, richer still than we're used to from Wong and his team (including perennial production designer/editor William Chang). He's certainly channelling von Sternberg whenever Zhang Ziyi walks through train smoke wearing a plump fur collar.

The most unexpectedly enjoyable film of all, though, was Noah Baumbach's star vehicle for Greta Gerwig, **Frances Ha**, from a script co-written by the pair of them. Baumbach's films usually have a sour edge to them, but not this one. Gerwig plays the titular Frances, a 27-year-old whose career as a dancer has plateaued, but who wants to prolong her world of private jokes with her apartment-share best pal Sophie (Mickey Sumner); when Sophie decides to move out and it becomes clear that Frances won't be wanted for a big Christmas dance production, she has to reassess. Shot in black and white and structured around Frances's subsequent changes of address, the film explores her dilemma in the style of a Woody Allen comedy about kooky folk, but with a better feel for deadpan irony, a warmer view of humanity and a faster sense of pacing than Allen displayed even at his peak. Gerwig is tremendous as the kind of impulsive person who talks herself out of doing the sensible thing all the time, and if you like her persona – last put to good effect in Whit Stillman's *Damsels in Distress* – you'll undoubtedly be won over by this. It was the last film I saw in Berlin, so I left on a high. 📺

'Promised Land' is released in the UK on 19 April



'Layla Fourie'



'The Necessary Death of Charlie Countryman'



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BRITISH FILMS: 'SIGHTSEERS', 'KILL LIST' AND OTHERS TO BE WON ON DVD

In Ben Wheatley's darkly comic *Sightseers* a couple's camper holiday turns into a nightmare of a murderous killing spree. STUDIOCANAL now brings the film to DVD and Blu-ray with extras including commentary from the director and actors. We have five copies to give away along with Wheatley's previous film *Kill List* and three other British films from STUDIOCANAL: *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, *Four Lions* and *Tyrannosaur*.

To be in with a chance of winning, simply answer the following question:

Q. Which one of these museums is NOT visited by Tina and Chris in 'Sightseers'?

- National Tramway Museum (Crich)
- Pencil Museum (Keswick)
- Beamish Museum (County Durham)



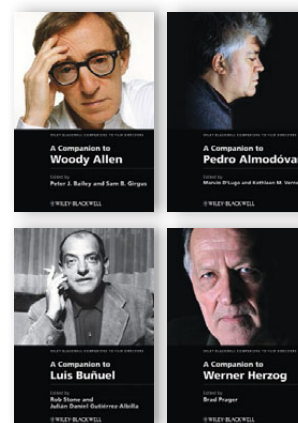
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Wiley-Blackwell presents a series of in-depth books surveying key film directors. Woody Allen, Pedro Almodóvar, Luis Buñuel and Werner Herzog are the latest on the list. Each companion is over 500 pages, and essays from the host of international contributors include 'Herzog and Photography', 'Errant Movement and Rhythm in Buñuel's Mexican Comedies' and 'Is There a French Almodóvar?' We have sets of all four companions to give away to two readers.

To be in with a chance of winning, simply answer the following question:

Q. Who directed the short 'Werner Herzog Eats his Shoe'?

- Werner Herzog
- Les Blank
- Steff Gruber



KRISTIN SCOTT THOMAS: A SELECTION OF FILMS ON DVD

To tie in with our feature (page 32) on actress Kristin Scott Thomas we have a selection of her films on DVD to give away to three readers. In more recent years Scott Thomas has carved out her career as a lead actor in primarily British and French films, garnering much acclaim in the process. The films in this selection include *Tell No One*, *Sarah's Key*, *I've Loved You So Long*, *The Woman in the Fifth* and *The English Patient*.

To be in with a chance of winning, simply answer the following question:

Q. In which film does Kristin Scott Thomas play a character called 'Anna Cooper'?

- The Woman in the Fifth
- Sarah's Key
- In Your Hands



Our thanks to Artificial Eye, Entertainment Film, Lionsgate Home Entertainment UK, Metrodome Group, Revolver Entertainment and StudioCanal for the prizes. *The English Patient*, *I've Loved You So Long* and *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen*: © Miramax. © Lionsgate Home Entertainment UK. *Gosford Park* © 2001 USA Films, LLC. All Rights Reserved.

HOW TO ENTER

Email your answer, name and address, putting either 'Sightseers competition', 'Companion to Directors competition' or 'Kristin Scott Thomas competition' in the subject heading, to s&scompetition@bfi.org.uk Or send a postcard with your answer to either 'Sightseers competition', 'Companion to Directors competition', or 'Kristin Scott Thomas competition' at Sight & Sound, BFI, 21 Stephen Street, London W1T 1LN

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EUROSTAR

Her subtle performances in films such as 'I've Loved You So Long' and 'Leaving' have made Kristin Scott Thomas as popular in France as she is in her native UK, where parts for older women seldom offer such scope. But how do perceptions of her vary on either side of the Channel?

By Ginette Vincendeau

What is it about French cinema and British actresses? Like Jane Birkin and Charlotte Rampling before her, Kristin Scott Thomas has found French films more hospitable than English-language ones, as confirmed by her role in François Ozon's new film *In the House* (*Dans la maison*). She plays Jeanne, an art-gallery curator married to German (Fabrice Luchini), a teacher who becomes obsessed with gifted but manipulative pupil Claude (Ernst Umhauer). Although Luchini and Umhauer are the leads, *In the House* perfectly showcases Scott Thomas's elegant presence and rare talent for performing with ease in another language.

Appearing in more than 70 films since 1984, Scott Thomas has had a surprisingly varied career across several national cinemas: primarily British, American and French, but also Canadian, Romanian, Italian and German. She has deplored the narrow spectrum of her English-language roles, which confine her repeatedly to "not only Englishwomen but pre-World War II aristocratic Englishwomen" – epitomised by *A Handful of Dust* (1987) and *Gosford Park* (2001) – and has celebrated the greater diversity afforded by her French films.

Yet her British identity clings to her persona in the French films too, even as it is deployed in complex ways in a wider range of works. Particularly noteworthy is a series of recent dramas in which she has the starring role, which have further raised her profile in the country: *I've Loved You So Long* (*Il y a longtemps que je t'aime*, 2008), *Leaving* (*Partir*, 2008), *Sarah's Key* (*Elle s'appelait Sarah*, 2010) and *In Your Hands* (*Contre toi*, 2010). Moreover, her English accent, light but unmistakable, is key to her appeal – as is evident from Ozon's admission that even though "she can speak without an accent, I encouraged her to keep it. I liked her making mistakes in French. It's charming." Scott Thomas thus emerges as a fascinating test-case for

the relationship between an actor's persona, national and class identity, as well as contemporary French cinema's love affair with accented actors – especially when they are beautiful women.

ENGLISH ROSE TO FRENCH TOAST

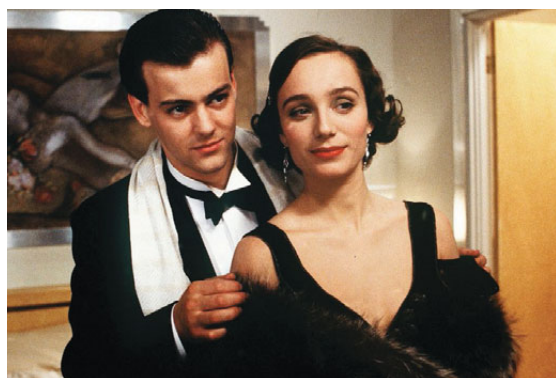
Even though she is often bracketed with Jane Birkin and Charlotte Rampling (and to some extent Jacqueline Bisset), Scott Thomas offers quite a different profile, and not just because she is younger. Birkin and Rampling arrived in France trailing the image of permissive Swinging London from such classics as *Blowup* (1966) and *Georgy Girl* (1966). Scott Thomas, by contrast, moved to France as an *au pair* in the early 1980s after a disappointing experience at London's Central School of Speech & Drama. She was still keen on acting and attended the Rue Blanche (ENSATT) drama school in Paris, aiming for the theatre rather than film. In the end, the screen won out, though she would return to the stage in Chekhov's *Three Sisters* in 2003, Pirandello's *As You Desire Me* (2005) and Pinter's *Betrayal* (2011) and – currently – *Old Times*.

Her first modest screen appearances were in television in 1984: small parts in the French series *Les Enquêtes du commissaire Maigret* and the American *Mistral's Daughter*. Her first romantic lead was in the unlikely context of Prince's 1986 vanity movie *Under the Cherry Moon*. There followed, in rapid succession, French art films *Agent Trouble* (1987) and *La Méridienne* (1988), and her breakthrough British role in *A Handful of Dust*, Charles Sturridge's film of Evelyn Waugh's novel of English upper-class mores. The latter made her name internationally, while reinforcing her aristocratic stereotyping; as she put it, "People ended up believing that I could only act with a glass of champagne in my hand." (British TV regularly cast her as an authority on fashion and good taste, as demonstrated in cameos on *Top Gear* and *Absolutely Fabulous*.) As well as coalescing her image around cut-glass accented, upper-crust Englishness, the early years also prefigured the eclectic nature of her overall screen career, made possible by her fluency in two languages. For the best part of three decades, Scott Thomas has continued to alternate 'small' French auteur films, international television series, Hollywood blockbusters (*Mission Impossible*) and English-language heritage productions, often in memorable supporting parts (*The English Patient*, *Four Weddings and a Funeral*).

Her commitment to serious acting and subtle performance style – in English and French – gained industry and critical recognition from early on.

CLASS APART

Scott Thomas's performance in 2008's *I've Loved You So Long*, right, showed a range and maturity that her earlier 'posh' roles in British films like *A Handful of Dust*, below, barely hinted at







A CERTAIN AGE
Complex roles in recent French films such as 'In the House', top, 'Leaving', left, and 'Sarah's Key', right, show how far Scott Thomas has progressed since her big-screen debut in 'Under the Cherry Moon', below

As early as 1989, for instance, she won the best actress prize at the Cabourg Romantic Film Festival for *Bille en tête*, a romantic comedy in which she plays a society woman who falls in love with a 16-year-old boy. Since then she has garnered numerous nominations for international awards, winning an impressive number, notably for *Four Weddings*, *The English Patient*, *Gosford Park* and *I've Loved You So Long*. Curiously, given the praise lavished on her French performances (a review of *I've Loved You So Long* talked of her having "achieved acting perfection"), she is yet to receive a French César, despite nominations for that film, for *Leaving* and for *Sarah's Key*.

It should be noted that just over a third of Scott Thomas's films are French, though the perception of her career as Gallic-inflected is understandable in terms of her long personal association with the country (she was married to a Frenchman and had three children there) and the fact there has been an increase in her French leading parts in the last decade. This may be due partly to her age (she turned 50 in 2010). Many agree with critic Andrew Sarris that "the French have always been kinder and courtlier to their older actresses than have the pathologically youth-obsessed Americans" – as demonstrated by the longevity of the screen careers of Catherine Deneuve, Nathalie Baye and Jeanne Moreau. But Scott Thomas's French career is also to do with the vitality of auteur cinema, where she has found her major roles; in France, as elsewhere, older actresses do not get lead parts in big-budget action films, thrillers or comedies. In 2003, in response to *Positif's* observation that she often works with novice filmmakers, she replied: "Yes, because others don't ask me. In France I am always offered

first or second films." Conversely, the actress's wish to work with established French directors such as Patrice Chéreau, André Téchiné and Jacques Audiard has not yet been granted (though she has now worked with Ozon). On the other hand, the artistic freedom, lower budgets and high proportion of women directors within French auteur cinema have ensured, beyond the parts *per se*, an interest in mature women characters (both *In Your Hands* and *Leaving* are directed by women) and offbeat subjects (as in *I've Loved You So Long*, by first-time director Philippe Claudel). Do these films, however, challenge the dominant stereotype that Scott Thomas deplored in her English-language films?

SEX, CLASS AND ACCENTS

It's a long way from the haughty upper-class socialites of *A Handful of Dust* and *Gosford Park* or the wealthy New York fashionista of *The Horse Whisperer* (1998) to the provincial schoolteacher of *Autobus* (*Aux yeux du monde*, 1991), the distraught lover of *Leaving* or the distressed heroine of *I've Loved You So Long*. French films often cast Scott Thomas as a foreigner: she is British, sometimes American or 'European' – as in *The Woman in the Fifth* (2011), where she plays a mysterious, half-French, half-Romanian femme fatale who returns to haunt the hero 20 years after her presumed death – or they explain her accent by a prolonged stay in England (*I've Loved You So Long*). Whatever the narrative device, her otherness is socially inflected in ways that, within the naturalistic aesthetics of French auteur films, echo in a more subdued form the Anglo-American characterisations; she plays primarily glamorous, well-dressed, erotically charged women in bourgeois habitats and occupations: a journalist in *Sarah's Key*, a surgeon in *In Your Hands*, a former doctor in *I've Loved You So Long*, a physiotherapist married to a wealthy doctor in *Leaving*, a ruthless company executive in the thriller *Love Crime* (*Crime d'amour*, 2010), an art-gallery curator in *In the House*.

While Scott Thomas's persona in these recent French films eschews the narrow typecasting and historical settings (and costumes) of the British-based heritage films, it still derives from the class-inflected combination of her physique, voice and nationality. Her regular features, high cheekbones, smooth skin, pale green eyes and sensual mouth add up to the face of a classically beautiful woman. In a bid for realism, films such as *I've Loved You So Long* go out of their way to make her look 'plain' with oversized coat, mousy hair and no make-up, but not entirely convincingly.

In addition to her beauty, which places her apart (characters in that film keep remarking on her being "ravishing"), her features connote the privileged woman: her high forehead, icy stare and glossy straight hair, the 'timeless' elegance of her understated clothing, her svelte, toned body, youthful-looking even in her early fifties. These attributes do not have to be nationally inflected (French actresses Carole Bouquet and Fanny Ardant come to mind as examples of similarly elegant bourgeois screen identities), but Scott Thomas's Englishness adds another layer concerned with



BRIT. NATIONAL ARCHIVE (3); KOBAL COLLECTION (3)

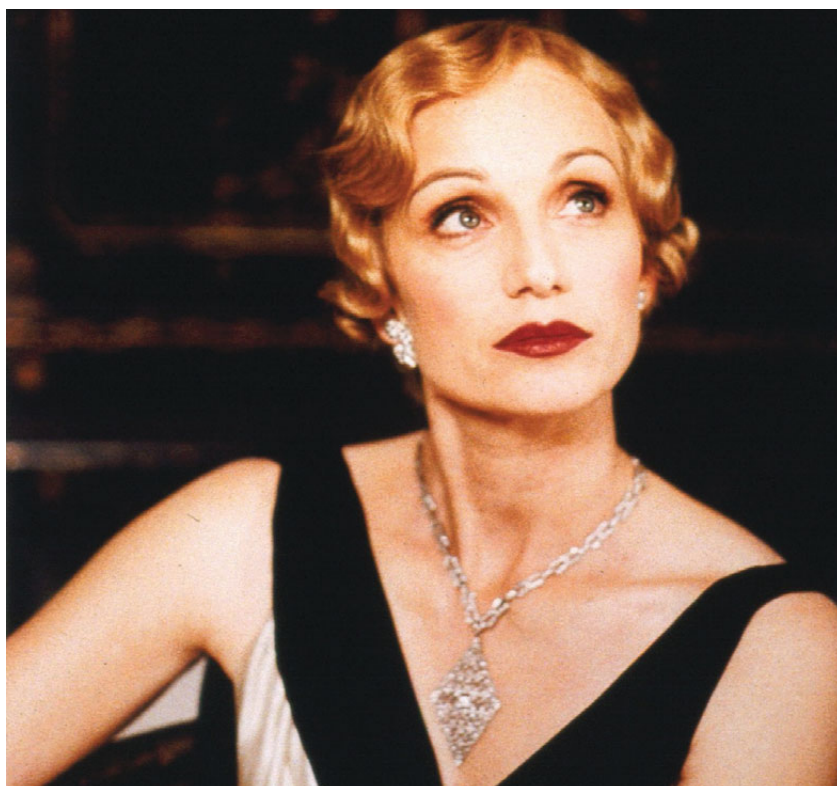
perceptions of British femininity in France.

In French culture, British women were for a long time associated with Victorian repressed sexuality. The Swinging London of the 1960s turned this image upside down, creating a new stereotype of sexual liberation. As Leila Wimmer says in her study of Jane Birkin's French films, "a supposed permissiveness came to be associated with [British] young women." As we move further from the 1960s, traces of the permissive stereotype linger, while an aura of restraint persists, in screen images and popular culture at large. For example French journalists, whatever the topic, rarely refer to Britain without mentioning the Queen (the British are always dubbed "the subjects of her gracious majesty") or using tongue-in-cheek expressions such as 'shocking!'. In *Under the Sand* (*Sous le sable*, 2000) and *Swimming Pool* (2002), Ozon cast the older Rampling in ways that perfectly encapsulate this dichotomy, endowing her with a prim, initially glacial identity, under which passionate sexuality smoulders; in *Swimming Pool* her character even says, "I was around in Swinging London." Ozon modernises the type with Scott Thomas in *In the House*. As Jeanne, she is a contemporary woman unperturbed by the obscene art in her gallery (her husband is the one who is shocked). Yet the impact of Jeanne's seduction by schoolboy Claude derives from the contrast between her poised surface and the sexual passion beneath.

Made four years earlier, Catherine Corsini's *Leaving* presents a less subtle variation on the theme. Scott Thomas stars as Susan, wife of a well-off doctor (Yvan Attal) and mother of two adolescent children. At the beginning of the film she is planning to go back to work as a physiotherapist, but instead she falls passionately in love with a Catalan builder working on her house, Ivan (Sergi López), who also happens to have done time. She is ready to give up bourgeois comfort and brave the hostility of her social circle in order to live with him, but her vengeful husband makes their lives unbearable.

Some have seen *Leaving* as a tragic tale of love and desire, others as a crude version of "the lady and the pleb" (as the husband puts it in the film), but there is no doubt that Scott Thomas's Britishness adds meaning to the dynamic of the central couple. A middle-class Englishwoman falling for a working-class Spaniard indulges the popular fantasy of posh white Northern European woman getting pleasure from Mediterranean rough trade – echoing Hitchcock's claim that "the most interesting women, sexually, are the English women, because they hide their sexual passion." A milder version of this configuration informs the relationship between the Scott Thomas character and her kidnapper in *In Your Hands*. It's difficult to imagine a film based on the reverse national/sexual coupling.

Scott Thomas's appeal in her French films – at least for the French – is also inextricably tied up with her accent. This may be irritating to an actress who wishes to blend with the parts and who worried – wrongly – in 2003 that "as I am ageing my accent is getting stronger: soon I won't find any work!" To an Anglophone ear her clipped tones suggest her upper-middle-class background and education, but to French-speakers they evoke a mild exoticism. Since the coming of sound French films have incorporated the accents of foreign actors – from Erich von Stroheim to Eddie Constantine and Curd Jürgens – into the



soundscape of French cinema (unlike Italy and Germany, where voices were dubbed). Most remarkable in this respect is a series of Anglophone and Northern European actresses who have flourished in French cinema: Jean Seberg, Anna Karina, Jane Birkin, Sylvia Kristel, Jacqueline Bisset, Charlotte Rampling and Kristin Scott Thomas. For these actresses, sexual appeal is intimately connected to sonic exoticism (as it was for singer Petula Clark, also a star in France). By contrast, as Michel Chion points out in his book *Le Complexe de Cyrano*, native Francophone accents from Belgium, Quebec and Switzerland have to be unlearned if actors wish to make headway in France. At the same time, French cinema has seen the disappearance of most regional and working-class accents, except in comic parts and the ethnic enclaves of *banlieue* cinema. Anglophone accents in this context represent a politically neutral exoticism that is simultaneously endowed with the glamour of cosmopolitanism and sex appeal. In this respect Scott Thomas need not worry about her accent putting a brake on her career.

Whatever the limitations of the parts on offer, Scott Thomas has forged an impressive career and commands respect on both sides of the Channel – she has been awarded an OBE and the *Légion d'honneur*. While her Englishness is key to her appeal in France, her French career does her favours in the UK. As Charles Gant put it in *Sight & Sound* on the occasion of the release of *Sarah's Key*, "Scott Thomas has emerged over the past few years as an increasingly reliable arthouse brand, with her appearances in French-language films often seen as a reassuring marker for fans of upscale cinema." This may not have been her plan, but one of Scott Thomas's achievements is an important contribution to the entente cordiale.



'In the House' is released in the UK on 29 March, and is reviewed on page 94. To win a selection of Kristin Scott Thomas films on DVD, see page 30

To an Anglophone ear her clipped tones suggest her upper-middle-class background, but to French-speakers they evoke a mild exoticism

LADY OF THE HOUSE
In British films like 'Gosford Park', above, Scott Thomas has tended to be typecast as brittle aristocrats, in contrast to the wider range of roles on offer in France

A VERY BAD MAN

Eclipsed by 'Bonnie and Clyde' on its release in 1967, John Boorman's 'Point Blank' endures as the most mysterious of US crime movies, a potent mix of violence and surrealism

By David Thomson



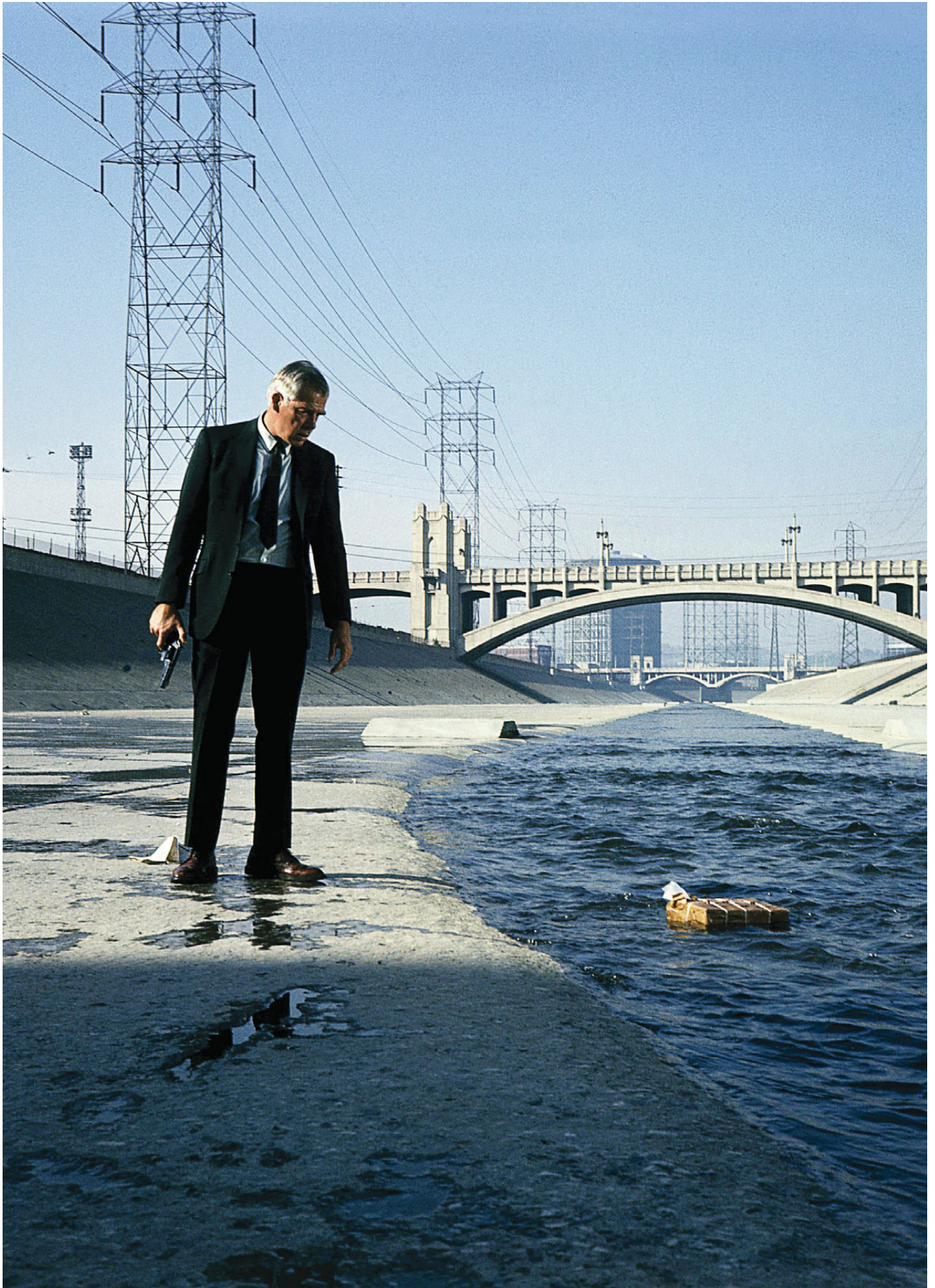
TO LIVE AND DIE IN L.A.
British director John Boorman brought an outsider's eye to Californian locations like the LA River, opposite, where Parker survives an ambush

As the purchasing power of \$93,000 diminishes, so *Point Blank* (the film that enshrined that sum) grows more potent. In retrospect, 1967 equates with *Bonnie and Clyde* and *Point Blank*, and the feeling that there was some buried affinity between the two films. In the US, they were released about two weeks apart, and soon the Warren Beatty production was rated as the more 'important' and in the running for Oscars. There was a controversy over its reception that helped identify a new type of criticism and allowed Pauline Kael to drive up in a 1931 Ford coupé and lift Beatty and his gang out of a jam.

Bonnie and Clyde is still a landmark, radiant with youthful self-destruction, and eventually on its way to the bank. But the Beatty-Arthur Penn picture seems cut and dried now, and very organised, as befits two very intelligent men. They had thought their outrage through in advance and reckoned on it catching the new counter-culture energy of beautiful outlaws beginning to be felt in 1967. Getting on for 50 years later, *Point Blank* seems mysterious still, and the better for that. Warner Brothers didn't understand the way *Bonnie and Clyde* worked. But MGM had no idea what *Point Blank* was about.

So both pictures can be read as portraits of their own making. When Beatty took the shoot away from Burbank and into Texas, he was acting out of independence and defiance. He did not want to make a studio film, so he cannot have been too upset when Jack Warner looked at the picture and took a leak. Had he embraced it, Beatty would have been dismayed. The picture was a tribute to new talent finding its own way to the banks.

But *Point Blank* was different. It was the adventure of a young London director clinging to a great star, and never quite knowing what his film was about. John Boorman has made it clear that Lee Marvin would stare down the studio and insist that the picture stayed with the kid. What Boorman wanted, Marvin would do. It only adds to the charm of it all if Boorman was occasionally breathless at Marvin's trust, and wishing that he could muster the same confidence. But *Point Blank* is a movie about an outsider, a beast in The Organization's building, who will not go away until his \$93,000 is laid





The sexual imagery in 'Point Blank' is close to surrealism. Walker fires his gun into Lynne's bed and lets the bullets tumble from his gun in slow motion's spent desire



PHYSICAL CONTACT
There's a sexual frisson to the violence, as Walker tracks down the wife (Sharon Acker, above) and best friend (John Vernon, below) who left him for dead



before him. Then, magically, he disappears.

By his own account (in *Adventures of a Suburban Boy*), Boorman, looking for a favourable wind, had picked up the perfect storm of Lee Marvin's need. As he got to know Marvin, he learned of the damage done to the man by the war and his unresolved violence. In the Pacific, Marvin had done bad things that never left him. Like every notable actor in Hollywood, Marvin was afraid of being cheated, and torn between two women (at least two). That was a triangulation that Boorman had observed in his own childhood. So in *Point Blank* Marvin would be Walker, a man – wronged by his wife and his best friend – in whom a terrible violence is freed. He would enlist his wife's sister Chris (Angie Dickinson), and he would love her or couple with her in the way the film's sexual climax imagines all parties in bed with one another. But when Walker leaves his money on the ground at Fort Point, San Francisco, he also walks out on any happy ending with Chris. Whereas Bonnie and Clyde do get shot to pieces, but they have each other in that exquisite shared glance and the shuddering rapture of an orgasm that has been hard to achieve in ordinary life. They go, but they come.

The sexual imagery in *Point Blank* is so much closer to surrealism. That includes Walker and his wife Lynne (Sharon Acker) in the rain, with that feeling of Walker as a great sea creature who has come ashore to claim her (being in the water is a vital strain in the film). Later on, when he breaks into her house, she is satin-clad but numb. That's when Walker fires his gun into her bed and lets the bullets tumble from his gun in slow motion's spent desire. Later he finds her dead (as if she needed to see Walker a last time before exiting).

More than that, the ties between Walker and Mal Reese (that very suggestive name, played by John Vernon) begin to realise the homosexual attraction that Beatty was famously shy of including in *Bonnie and Clyde*. That film's scriptwriters, David Newman and Robert Benton, had intended a three-way sexuality with Bonnie, Clyde and C.W. Moss, but Beatty flinched from it. He may have guessed it could hurt the audience and hardly faced how far it would upset him. But Walker and Reese are lovers of a kind. They are seen embracing on the floor in the party scene, and then when Walker comes for his revenge it is rendered in terms of humiliating seduction with the naked Reese dragged from sex and his bed clinging to a sheet that will soon be his shroud. When Walker grabs that sheet and draws Reese to the balcony, he is throttling his privates. Among all the men in The Organization that Walker must climb – Stegman, Brewster, Carter, Yost – there is the sour, gloating hatred of an all-male world. (It's Brewster who delivers the immortal line: "You're a very bad man, Walker, a very destructive man.")

Still to come is the realisation that Walker is truly killed in the film's opening rendezvous on Alcatraz, and that the entire story, Walker's progress, is a wish-fulfilment dream for the dying man in the cell. Boorman had indicated that possible structure to the studio in advance and, as you study Marvin's performance (or his being), you can see how far his sleepwalker is akin to living dead (George Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* would arrive the very next year). He is most himself doing nothing. Sometimes he sits, slumped and staring, like those dead men put in cars so the killer can escape. In the scene where he meets Lynne again,



KOBAL COLLECTION (2)

THE MANY FACES OF PARKER

From Lee Marvin to Jason Statham, a rogue's gallery of actors have had a crack at playing crime literature's most redoubtable armed robber

By John Wrathall

Films starring Jason Statham aren't generally renowned for their literary heritage – unless you count *Gnomeo & Juliet*, in which he provided the voice of Tybalt. Many of the target audience of his new film *Parker* will sit through its heists and fistfights unaware of the fact that it's an adaptation of Richard Stark's *Flashfire*, volume 19 in a 24-book series published between 1962 and 2009 that inspires the same devotion in fans of hard-boiled pulp fiction that Patrick O'Brian's Jack Aubrey novels inspire in men with boats. (Those who are aware of the literary connection, meanwhile, will probably be staying away. "Almost everything about it is awful," was the verdict on *Parker* of the erudite fansite violentworldofparker.com. For director Taylor Hackford's previous record as a custodian of *noir* heritage, see his 1984 *Out of the Past* remake *Against All Odds*, best known for its Phil Collins theme song.)

What's ironic in the case of the Parker novels – written by Donald Westlake under the Stark pseudonym – is that, as their critical reputation has soared, screen adaptations have headed progressively downmarket from the high point that was *Point Blank*, adapted from the first (and perhaps weakest) book of the series, *The Hunter*. In the hands of John Boorman, the unstoppable quest of armed robber Parker to recover his loot from 'The Outfit' acquired a dreamlike, existential flavour; even the names were different, with a more symbolic 'Walker' taking on 'The Organization' – more facelessly corporate and Kafkaesque.

Point Blank is a great film, and Lee Marvin, by any other name, makes a formidable Parker, a totally unsentimental force of nature worthy of Stark's vision. But it was probably Boorman's arty divergence from the stripped-down Stark template that inspired *noir* specialist Brian Helgeland (then fresh from his Oscar for adapting *L.A. Confidential*) to try his own take on *The Hunter* with *Payback* (1999) – only to have his film extensively reworked by the studio, worried that the film's sour tone might tarnish the box-office allure of star Mel Gibson. (Gibson would see to that himself later, in his own way.)



The professional: Jason Statham in 'Parker'

Now, 51 years after the publication of *The Hunter*, Stark's 24 novels are available in a standardised University of Chicago Press edition, with admiring forewords from literary luminaries from John Banville to Dennis Lehane. So it's disappointing that Hackford's film aims no higher than what last month's *S&S* review called "proficient pulp... short on individual flavour".

Statham is, however, the first screen Parker to actually be called Parker; previous adaptations of individual books weren't allowed to use the character's name unless they committed to filming the series. This makes his screen incarnations harder to spot. In John Flynn's *The Outfit* (1973), based on book three, Robert Duvall is 'Earl Macklin', once more up against an entire criminal organisation. Duvall certainly has the right down-to-business look and manner, and



In your face: Robert Duvall as Parker in 'The Outfit'

the supporting cast is a rogue's gallery of *noir* favourites (Robert Ryan, Elisha Cook Jr, Timothy Carey, Jane Greer). But the film's not entirely free of the prevailing curse of Parker adaptations: trying to make this gloriously amoral character sympathetic, in this case by having him avenge a murdered brother – when the whole point of Stark's antihero is his relentless focus on the job, with human relationships a mere complicating factor.

Other Parker adaptations all had an unnecessary gimmick. *Mise à sac* (1967) relocated book five, *The Score*, to France. *The Split* (1968), starring Jim Brown as McClain, gave a blaxploitation spin to *The Seventh*. A 1983 British version of book 14, *Slayground*, was shot in an amusement park in Blackpool, with Peter Coyote as 'Stone'. Most tangentially of all, Godard's *Made in USA* (1966), starring Anna Karina, borrowed sufficient plot elements from book six, *The Jugger*, to warrant a lawsuit that restricted the film's distribution in the US until after Westlake's death in 2008.

Of course no film could ever capture the real joy of the Parker books: the unique tone, at once deadpan and action-packed, of Stark/Westlake's prose, as ruthlessly focused on the job in hand as Parker himself. Take any of the 24 down from the shelf and by the end of the first sentence you're in. Here's *Slayground*: "Parker jumped out of the Ford with a gun in one hand and the packet of explosive in the other..."



'Parker' is on release in the UK, and was reviewed in the March issue

the script had him asking her questions. But in the film, Walker sits there, abandoned by story or dialogue, and Lynne asks and answers the questions. Then later, when Walker is with Chris but seemingly out of her reach, she challenges the automaton by turning on every appliance in the house. When this arouses him she beats on his chest, but he is hardly there to be touched. For that sequence alone, I think, *Point Blank* is endlessly enigmatic, stunningly beautiful and as full of helpless poetry as some moments in *Un chien andalou*.

Point Blank is a movie with nearly abstract design elements. The colour scheme is rigorously controlled: a range of greens for the business suits, and yellows from tiger to cowardice in the scene in the hotel penthouse where Chris offers herself to trap Reese. There was a time when Boorman thought he would have to shoot everything in San Francisco, but he found that city too pretty and soft, so it became a story torn between northern and southern California. The car lot, the rivers in concrete culverts, the luxury houses in the hills – those were from LA, and the scene where Walker paces down a long corridor uses a part of LAX (the airport) that I think is still there, no matter that it looks designed for a movie moment. Similarly, the hotel where Reese lives is a real place, the Huntley, that Boorman treats in the way Fritz Lang might have handled sets he had designed and built.

As for San Francisco, Alcatraz is real, but by 1967 the island prison had become more a mythic location than a real place. The final money drop is not Alcatraz but Fort Point, on the tip of the peninsula, right below the southern end of the Golden Gate Bridge, and close to the spot where Madeleine Elster (Kim Novak) goes into the water in *Vertigo* – she is another kind of somnambulist. So the film concludes with a shot that lifts up to see Alcatraz across the bay, its light flashing.

The *Point Blank* adventure seems so unlikely now. John Boorman was 33 and he had just done *Catch Us If You Can* with the Dave Clark Five. He met Marvin in London, when the actor had recently received the Oscar for *Cat Ballou* and was shooting *The Dirty Dozen*. The one-time lout, the sadist from *The Big Heat*, now had the power that allowed a film to be made. Shown a script, the actor and the director shrugged it off and started to rewrite, approaching the Donald Westlake novel *The Hunter* (written under the name of Richard Stark) from scratch. Boorman worked on a new draft with Alex Jacobs and Bill Stair. Westlake's novel had a similar plotline, but the protagonist was named Parker. Westlake would go on to do another 23 novels about that character (see sidebar page 39). So he hardly vanished.

Westlake had nothing to do with the film, but he liked it when he saw it. *Point Blank* picked up not a single Oscar nomination in the year of *Bonnie and Clyde*, *The Graduate*, *In Cold Blood*, *In the Heat of the Night*, *Doctor Dolittle*, *Wait Until Dark* and *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*. When you think of those films you begin to feel the turmoil of 1967 and the way the best American films are so often ones that slip through the system.

The studio didn't like the film, and it was put before Margaret Booth. She was 69 then and the doyenne of the MGM editing department. She had had a hand in Erich von Stroheim's *The Wedding March*, *Mutiny on the Bounty* and the second *Ben-Hur*. She looked at *Point Blank* and made a couple of small but helpful suggestions. Then



when the film was screened and the studio bosses expressed their unhappiness she growled, "You change one frame of this movie over my dead body." Booth lived to 102.

Yes, there has been a remake of *Point Blank*, but I see no need to mention it. The real influences reach backwards and forwards in time. The impassivity of Marvin's Walker had been tested out a few years earlier in Don Siegel's *The Killers* (also starring Dickinson). There is another such calm killer in *Point Blank*: James Sikking's pipe-smoking rifleman, who surely has a resemblance to Lee Harvey Oswald. The idea of revenge and criminal intent was collapsing. In Jean-Pierre Melville's *Le Samouraï* (1967), Alain Delon's Jef Costello is half American and half Japanese but entirely from movie mythology, and he knows his whole enterprise is absurd. Travis Bickle goes through all the motions of being vigilante and avenger, and he is the instrument of massacre, but the law never comes to complain and finally he is back in his taxi, like a junkie doing rehab.

There are lines about killing that echo in the early 70s: "He'd kill us if he had the chance"; "If there's one thing we've learned it is that we can kill anyone." Dead or alive, Walker may be seen now as a forerunner for movie killers who go unpunished – like Kevin Spacey's Keyser Soze in *The Usual Suspects*; like Michael Corleone; like Hannibal Lecter, who has a dinner date, not eternal solitary confinement; like the killer in *Zodiac*.

Perhaps Walker never existed, except in his and our fantasies. *Point Blank* was nagging at that possibility and at the wondrous if inexplicable delight of a hero behaving like a monster. In a few years later, in 1973, the decent, humane but ultimately unimaginative Fred Zinnemann would make *The Day of the Jackal*, in which the whole film tracks the way Edward Fox's character plans to assassinate President De Gaulle. It's a tidy, ingenious, old-fashioned film in which no one seems to realise that the audience wants the assassination to work. They feel they deserve it. So, do killers have to pay? Walker is erased, which is a kind of going free.



'Point Blank' is rereleased by the BFI on 29 March, and plays at BFI Southbank, London until 11 April as part of a John Boorman season

COLOUR SCHEME

Yellow dominates the scenes involving Reese (John Vernon) and Parker's sister-in-law Chris (Angie Dickinson)

network
RELEASING



LAURENCE ANYWAYS

a film by **XAVIER DOLAN**

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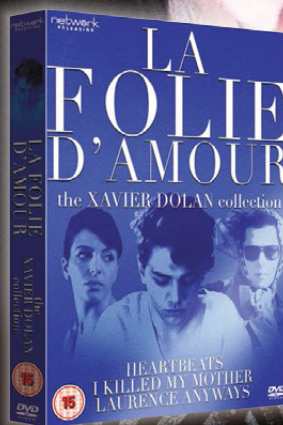
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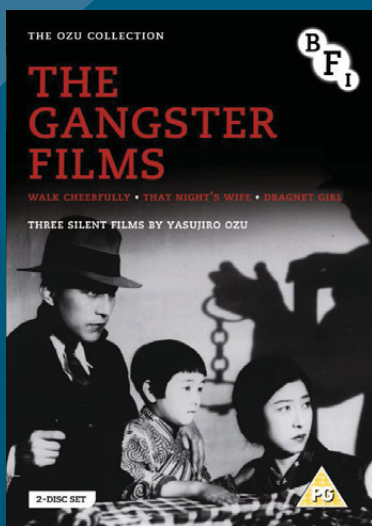
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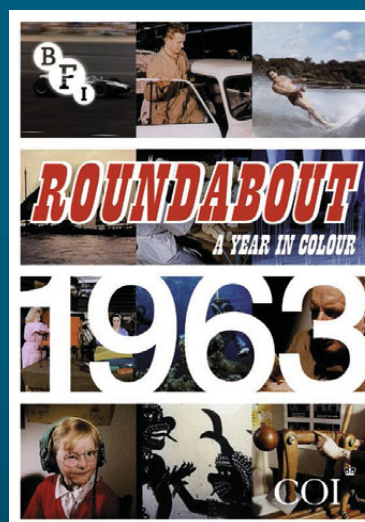
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DEVOTION SICKNESS

An excellent successor to his 2007 Palme d'Or-winner '4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days', Romanian director Cristian Mungiu's 'Beyond the Hills' is a sombre, provocative and unsettling story of life in an Orthodox convent

By Edward Lawrenson

Romanian filmmaker Cristian Mungiu's *Beyond the Hills* (*Dupa dealuri*) is his first feature since *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* (*4 luni, 3 saptamâni si 2 zile*) and is every bit as accomplished as that 2007 Palme d'Or-award winner. The new film is set mainly in an Orthodox convent in rural Moldavia – the film's title indicates the location's remoteness from civilisation. It's here that Alina (Cristina Flutur), a young Romanian woman recently resident in Germany, visits her childhood friend Voichita (Cosmina Stratan), one of the more devout nuns in the order. The film charts the couple's relationship, which began when they were kids in a nearby orphanage, before blossoming – it is strongly hinted – into love. It creates a compelling portrait of the unruly influence Alina has on convent life – the other nuns come to regard her as possessed; she battles with the priest (Valeriu Andriuta) in charge of the order – all of which tests her loyalty to her old friend.

Beyond the Hills is inspired by a real-life 2005 Orthodox exorcism that ended in tragedy. The film sticks to the contours of that case and recounts, with slow-burning tension, the grim consequences of the nuns' religious hysteria. However, as Mungiu tells me in the interview below – conducted before the London Film Festival gala screening of the film (sponsored by *Sight & Sound*) in October 2012 – he has scrupulously reimagined and fictionalised the event.

Filmed in the same long-take style that lent *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* such sombre authority, *Beyond the Hills* emerges as a haunting, unnerving portrait of the clash between secular and religious values, and a gripping study

GETTY IMAGES (2)



in changing power relations. With fine performances by an ensemble cast – conducted for long stretches in prayerful whispers—it avoids the heated controversy and snap judgements surrounding the 2005 case. The effect is provocative and deeply unsettling. Mungiu’s film is a darkly ambiguous triumph engineered with commanding precision.

Edward Lawrenson: ‘Beyond the Hills’ is based on a controversial case that divided opinion in Romania, but your film is cautious about passing judgement.

Cristian Mungiu: Films should not include the opinion of the author regarding who’s guilty or not. What you need to do as a director – especially on subject-matter as complicated as this – is to make sure that you give people all the detail and information they need to form their own opinion. I tried to understand how this could happen from every character’s position. I wrote the characters and the dialogue this way. I made sure I never judged these people, I just placed myself in their position.

I tried to direct the actors the same way, telling them they just need to react to the situation, be as truthful as possible to that specific situation and not think about what the film is speaking about.

EL: The doctor’s refusal to help the clearly troubled Alina drives her back to the convent. So when the film does assign blame, isn’t it towards more official bodies such as the hospital?

CM: What I was trying to think about was the fact that the abstract values [of religion] should remain abstract, not concrete, and the film speaks about what happens

UPHILL JOURNEY
The new film from director Cristian Mungiu, above, ‘Beyond the Hills’ centres on the troubled relationship between Voichita (Cosmina Stratan, far left) and Alina (Cristina Flutur)

when these two things get mixed up. The priest and the sisters’ first reaction to Alina’s behaviour was good; they took her to the hospital. But the response of the rational world, from the doctors, was not good. Instead of simply providing rational advice, they added some spiritual advice, suggesting it might be good to pray for her. But you shouldn’t say this as a doctor – that’s your own personal point of view and you can confuse people.


It’s the consequence of a society that doesn’t really work well – in terms of education, in terms of the profound values that religion should pass on to people, in terms of popular superstitions. Romanians declare themselves to be very religious. They all seem to know a lot about rituals, but at the same time there’s so much hatred in society, so much indifference. If this is how they behave, you start wondering how much they’ve assimilated the Christian values their religion should have given them. They don’t focus on the right things.

EL: How has the film been received in Romania?

CM: We had a few premiere screenings and the response of the audience was better than I expected – they managed to experience the film as if they were there and they were very touched by the subject. We had an early reaction from someone representing the Orthodox Church, which unfortunately was very dogmatic, the way you’d expect, along the lines of “this is not what really happened.” They should focus on something else. For example [the Church’s] reaction to the real case was preposterous: they expelled these people 24 hours after it came into the press, without enacting the regular



DIVIDED LOYALTY
Voichita, all pics, finds herself torn between obedience to her order's priest (Valeriu Andriuta, top right) and her feelings for Alina, bottom right

 procedures of judging them. They were worried about having an awful image, so they said, "Let's just throw them away."

I hope later on [the Church] will be wise enough to understand that you won't find a more balanced and more understanding view of their position than you see in my film. But for now even posing questions bothers the religious leaders so much.

EL: I suppose there's an aspect of traditional religious thought that doesn't invite questions.

CM: But this is outdated. Everything is to be questioned. Finally what this story tells you is [that] even if you place yourself in such a community where somebody else makes decisions, you still feel individual guilt – for the consequences of group action. Once you understand this you realise responsibility is individual, therefore every decision is personal – you shouldn't let anybody else decide something on your behalf. And if a decision is to be personal then you need to get an education – because there is no free will unless people have the means to make the right decision.

EL: 'Beyond the Hills' extends the long-take approach you used in '4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days'.

CM: I only use one shot per scene. I never use music. I never use funny angles – it's always straight, the regular perspective you have on life.

EL: Is this a high-risk strategy because it limits your editing choices?

CM: Of course. There's nothing much you can do later on. This kind of film requires great strength as a director.

I couldn't work like this on my first film. You need a kind of authority. With the actors, for example: they have to understand how difficult it's going to be. Everything is precise. You need to know dialogue by heart. Still I preserve the liberty of changing things if they don't work and I expect them to adapt every time.

The camerawork is very difficult. As you can imagine there is a lot of choreography so I can be closer or at more of a distance to things; the camera movement needs, little by little, to eliminate all the things that are not necessary. It's a very complicated process to have it seem natural.

The film speaks a lot about violence, how violence gets to people, and actually you don't know how you will be able to stage this until you are there on the set. Because you come there in the morning with some very nice people and everybody's chatting, and still two hours later you need to place them in the situation in which they will become very aggressive. There's no way to fake violence: you have to experience and let it get to you and this makes working with actors a lot more difficult.

EL: Much of the dialogue is conducted in low voices or even whispers. Did you re-record much after the shoot?

CM: Not at all. I discovered something with the actors – that they have much more inflections in their voices, and a lot of shades of meaning, if they speak in a low voice. I have this problem all the time because the sound engineer is telling me, "I can't hear them!" If I could make them speak more loudly and keep all this [expressive range], I would, but actually it's not possible. I'm trying all the time to use the boom – but the actors are also hooked



up to radio mics, and there are a lot of microphones hidden in the shot. There are some shots we had to reframe slightly in post-production to disguise the boom, because we had to put the operator in some pretty strange positions, behind the bed, things like that.

I also work a lot on the sound in post-production: I won't use music, but I have 20, 30, 50 different tracks of sound in each scene, because you know there's no such thing in life as silence. So I recreate this whole world in sound in post-production. The world of the film is much bigger than what you see through the camera, so I use a lot of off-camera sound: you discover immediately when you shoot in long takes that it's wrong to just have everything that's important in shot. The sound brings a lot of reality to the scene that is not present in the shot.

EL: How much did the film change in the edit?

CM: There's not much you can do in the editing. You can cut off a little from the beginning and the end, and establish the rhythm of the cuts. But if you are wrong when you shoot it's going to be in the film because the rhythm is inside the scene. This is why on the set the whole time it's so difficult to work with long takes. You have to speed up people, and the tenth take and beyond is always 50 per cent shorter than the first take.

I cut out everything that I thought provided unnecessary explanation about what happened. And I also cut those sequences when my ability to get it right simply didn't work – the results weren't good enough. It happens. It's not that easy. Especially when you have scenes with many people. You are not on solid ground when you

Film consists of all the things you plan and all the things that just happen

do this. Shooting isn't a fairytale, especially at minus-50 degrees and you have 50 people outside and they don't care about the film, they just want everything to finish so they can go back to the hotel and have a hot tea. You are under pressure. But for me it was very good because it's a way to work – being curious. You haven't made the film before, so you don't know what's best for it, you need to try things out. It was very good for me because I had a little time and it's only by comparing things that you understand which is better.

EL: Presumably you need to be quite resilient with these 50 people waiting outside.

CM: First of all you need to pretend you know what you're doing – even though sometimes you don't have a clue! You get up in the morning and for the first two hours you figure out how to shoot the scene in one take, and you depend on the day you have, sometimes you have good days, sometimes bad days. Film is a lot about the energy of the moment – it's influenced not just by the screenplay but by the actors, by the life of the crew. Sometimes things just come together and you reach a moment of grace and you think everything happened well. You think you control it all, but actually you don't. Film consists of all the things you planned and all the things that just happen.

EL: A moment of grace – that almost sounds like a religious credo.

CM: You need to be open, that's true.

i 'Beyond the Hills' is released in the UK on 15 March, and is reviewed on page 89

ARE WE NEARLY THERE YET?

Set largely in the back of a car during a tense family roadtrip, 'Thursday till Sunday' is a striking debut for Dominga Sotomayor, and further evidence of the growing diversity of Chilean cinema

By Mar Diestro-Dópido

Remember the boredom, the sense of isolation and confinement – but also the bonding, the excitement, the complicit silences – of those long family car trips, in the era before smartphones, good sound systems and air conditioning? The 27-year-old Chilean writer-director Dominga Sotomayor takes us down this universal memory lane in her offbeat, minimalist debut *Thursday till Sunday* (*De jueves a domingo*), a road movie of sorts in which the viewer is invited on to the back seat of a four-member family's trip from the Chilean capital Santiago to the less hospitable north of the country. It will prove a life-changing holiday whose outcome affects all the members of the family, particularly ten-year-old Lucía (Manuel, her seven-year-old brother, is oblivious to what's going on); witnessing the disintegration of her parents' marriage becomes the trigger for her own rite of passage and loss of innocence.

Family relations have always interested Sotomayor, and the original idea for the script was prompted by the rediscovery of an old photograph of herself and her cousin riding on the roof of the car, a striking image that Sotomayor describes as "bipolar – so dangerous, but so exciting as the same time. It recalled all those family trips up and down the long country that is Chile, where you never seem to arrive anywhere. I wanted to revisit that." In *Thursday till Sunday*, a microcosm of closely observed family routines is played out within a constraining *mise en scène* that corresponds to Lucía's own curtailed relationship to the events unfolding before her. As such, the point of view in the film remains consistent with



the children's – confined to the car's back seats, where perspective is limited and the full meaning of parents' conversations can only be guessed at.

For Sotomayor, the most important thing was to cleave to this formal limitation at every point, in a script she constructed predominantly around images. These images, she says "are dealt with like a choreography of layers of frames that repeat throughout the film". The aim was to return later in the film to the same compositions and see their meanings transform as the family dynamics shift – a concept that director of photography Bárbara Álvarez (who shot Lucrecia Martel's *The Headless Woman*) understood right from the beginning. Sotomayor considers herself fortunate to have worked with Álvarez: "We actually saw the same film. She also supported me by contributing great ideas. I told her about creating this limited system inside the car, of the repetition of certain framings, this enabling of the frames to contain the emerging of all that new life."

Álvarez's evocative cinematography, simultaneously intimate and universal, fixed and fleet of foot, consciously suppresses period references in order to give the film an air of ambiguity which enables past and present to be juxtaposed; the result, as Sotomayor puts it, is that the film is apprehended "like a memory played in the present". This sense of atemporality, together with the anonymity of the ever-changing landscape, also recreates a type of childhood that's now completely disappeared. "What I was looking for was this idea of practically being forced to be bored, a situation that's no longer so easy

to achieve now that we are always connected to the internet and the kids are busy playing in the back with the PlayStation".

Given the confinement and the small cast, a great deal of the film's impact comes down to the actors. The naturalism Sotomayor achieves emerges from simple guiding principles. "My aim was to work with kids with no experience in acting, commercials or TV series, so they were not conscious of what they were doing," she says. Santí Ahumada is perfectly pitched as pre-teen Lucía: still childish, at times moody, slowly awakening to her own femininity. Santí is a friend of Sotomayor's younger sister and both she and Emiliano Freifeld (Manuel) are neighbours of Sotomayor's mother Francisca Castillo, an actress, whose role as acting coach to the kids proved essential. Sotomayor used the year-long pre-production to create the necessary bonds between the two child leads; in addition, the script was filmed chronologically to induce in the children the idea of a journey and to enhance Santí's natural curiosity. Sotomayor kept the script away from her at all times, "so she'd spend the day trying to steal it from the other actors – her inquisitiveness and restricted access to information mirrored [that of] her character."

Sotomayor's own childhood was not typical. The community in which she grew up on the outskirts of Santiago had settled in half-finished houses on an abandoned patch of land under the mountains that initially had no electricity or telephone lines. "They were nothing like Chilean hippies," she says, "more a group of

My aim was to work with kids with no experience in acting, commercials or TV series



I AM A PASSENGER
Her place in the back seat gives Lucía (Santí Ahumada, left) a perspective on the tensions in her parents' marriage; the image of the children on the roof, right, recreates a moment from the director's own childhood



people with a mutual preference for living closer to nature as well as, somehow, a certain shared artistic sensibility. What is interesting is that it was not a community with a clear ideology or set of rules. I moved there in 1989, when I was four, and it was very beautiful. There were no generational divisions, so I was as much friends with my parents' friends as with children of my age. When I write about marriage, separation, relationships, family, I do it from this perspective, a very intense childhood whose images inform both *Thursday* and my next film." This will be a multiplatform project accompanied by exhibitions called *Late to Die Young* (*Tarde para morir joven*).

Sotomayor's childhood experience bears most fruit in the striking assurance with which she depicts the painfully believable disintegration of Lucía's family, the reasons for which are merely hinted at; like Lucía and her parents, the viewer spends the film trying to make sense of this elusive fracture. And although the parents are portrayed with equal sympathy – each is loved by their offspring, neither is regarded as guilty – Sotomayor admits the balance does slightly tilt to the mother's side. She is often shown trying to escape, a desire that makes her the focus of two of the most enigmatic scenes in the film.

One such moment takes place in the desert. Unable to deal with the discussion she's just had with her husband, Ana (Paolo Giannini) steps out of the car and disappears momentarily. This digression occasions a shift in rhythm that, as Sotomayor explains, is there to "represent the childhood trauma and frustration of being left alone. For Lucía, being alone in the desert for five minutes feels like being abandoned forever." Her anxiety is beautifully conveyed thanks to *mise en scène* that, despite the wide-open sparseness of the desert, feels every bit as suffocating as the car. It's almost as if nature itself has turned against the family, as Sotomayor explains: "I was interested most in the dialogue between the increasingly drier and isolated landscape and this dried-out couple, as all the members of the family blend in with the muted ochre colours of the scenery, which only accentuate their insignificance in the bigger scale of things."

CHILEAN CINEMA

Within the international scheme of things, Chilean cinema may also seem small. Given the overwhelming presence of North American product, exhibition remains the greatest challenge for Chilean cinema as there are still very few platforms to show homegrown films. This makes co-productions fundamentally important since they facilitate distribution outside Chile. And unlike, say, those in Argentina or Mexico, neither of Chile's main film schools is yet capable of providing first-grade facilities for aspiring filmmakers. "My school was lucky to have a digital camera, and there was not one single dolly," Sotomayor recalls. "We used to joke that our style is austere because we couldn't have it any other way – that we don't move the camera because we never learned how to since there was no dolly."

Despite these difficulties, Sotomayor believes things are looking brighter on the film scene in her native country. In fact, *Thursday* was one of the projects that benefited from a new production fund in Chile, which, although not enough to support a whole film (*Thursday* was also backed by the Hubert Bals Fund Plus scheme



We used to joke that our style is austere because we couldn't have it any other way – that we don't move the camera because we never learned to since there was no dolly

Dominga Sotomayor

and selected for Cinéfondation in Cannes), has still enabled 20 to 25 films to be made in Chile each year. It's a welcome situation for a lauded new generation of filmmakers that includes the likes of Fernando Guzzoni (*Dog Flesh*) and Christopher Murray (*Manuel de Ribera*). They are emerging in the wake of more established figures such as Andrés Wolf (*Violeta Went to Heaven*); the massively successful Pablo Larraín (*Tony Manero*, *No*) and his producer brother Juan de Dios Larraín (who have been nicknamed the Chilean Weinsteins); Cristián Jiménez, whose playfully meta-fictional love story *Bonsái* is closest in spirit to *Thursday*; Sebastián Silva, whose tragi-comedy *The Maid* (*La Nana*) brilliantly combines the personal and the political; and numerous others including Sebastián Lelio, whose critically acclaimed film *Gloria* has just taken the award for best actress at this year's Berlinale.

So are we witnessing a Chilean new wave? Sotomayor is cautious: "Chilean films are going to festivals and being very successful, but the main difference is that we, the newer generation, still in our twenties, are moving away from a cinema that traditionally dealt with poverty, politics or social issues [as best exemplified perhaps by the career of Patricio Guzmán]. The country has managed to attain some stability and we are back to more personal stories. But the fact is that you cannot say that this is a very Chilean cinema just yet, as you can say, for example, about Argentine, Romanian or Greek cinema. For Chile, it's still very early days."



'Thursday till Sunday' is released in the UK on 5 April, and is reviewed on page 106

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THE DEVIL IN THE DETAIL

In one of the most notable controversies of last year's Cannes Film Festival, the acclaimed Mexican director Carlos Reygadas (*'Silent Light'*) drew fire for the perceived incoherence of his – dazzling or baffling – new film *'Post Tenebras Lux'*. But he's not one to take criticism lightly

By **Fernanda Solórzano**

Carlos Reygadas has a reputation for antagonising audiences, but the Cannes premiere of his latest film *Post Tenebras Lux* took provocation to a new level. Many critics regarded the film as senseless, while a jury that proclaimed itself divided over the film gave him the Best Director prize. Objections to *Post Tenebras Lux* had nothing to do with the shock and awe elements that caused controversy in his previous films, but stemmed from what many considered a lack of narrative cohesion.

Reygadas's previous films *Japón* (2001), *Battle in Heaven* (*Batalla en el cielo*, 2005) and *Silent Light* (*Stellet Licht*, 2007) flirted with the oneiric, the allegorical and even the supernatural. Since the premises and settings of these movies did not belong to the realm of the ordinary, the leaps in continuity were not so baffling to the audience. *Post Tenebras Lux* is a different animal. Though the film bears Reygadas's stamp in terms of the use of non-professional actors, giving few clues to a character's past and showing actions without causality, its hero seems an unlikely choice for the director.

Juan (Adolfo Jiménez Castro) is an ordinary guy: an architect who lives in the country with his wife Natalia (Nathalia Acevedo) and their two kids. The couple seem acquainted with the rural environment, though it becomes apparent that their background is urban and upper-middle-class. Their house is rustic, but built with the finest materials and equipped with the best technology. During holidays, Juan and Natalia host fancy dinners where friends and extended family gather to quote Tolstoy and discuss politics and schooling options. The homeowners enjoy close interactions with the townspeople, which give the viewer insights into the ingrained lifestyle of the latter and how it clashes – to a tragic degree – with the values of Juan and his like.

Detractors of the film point to scenes that seem detached from the central plot and ambiguous in their nature – dreams, flashbacks, or glimpses into the future. These might seem dubious choices to some, because they show characters coexisting in a space and time that the turn of events renders impossible.

When the film premiered in Mexico, the reception was not at all like that in Cannes. Reygadas's countrymen usually regard his films as too arty and custom-made for the festival circuit. However, the same viewers who felt

alienated by the filmmaker's past intellectual ambitions spoke about *Post Tenebras Lux* with new-found interest. Few of them complained of obscurity.

Such views can be explained by the film's dozens of subtle references to class interactions so complex they might go unnoticed by non-Mexicans. Though not stated in the film, the story takes place in the city of Tepoztlán, the director's home for the past few years. Located 45 miles away from Mexico City, Tepoztlán has become a locale of choice for many *capitalinos*. Migration has been so steady that they have created a new society whose members call themselves *tepostizos* – a term that merges the name of the town and the Spanish word for fake [*postizo*]. For the most part, *tepostizos* are affluent and sophisticated, clearly distinguishable from the indigenous local population. Reygadas plays down the influence of this peculiarity. Yet, in recent years, Tepoztlán has become the paradigm of a new brand of violence in Mexico. While being literally forced by the government to maintain their folkloric appeal, many small towns like this one are also hubs for drug-trafficking routes and home to kidnapping gangs. Autobiographical readings aside, Reygadas daily immersion in a place where beautiful landscapes coexist with fear and rage has spawned an enigmatic piece of work. Riddled with contradictions, it's the rawest of his films.

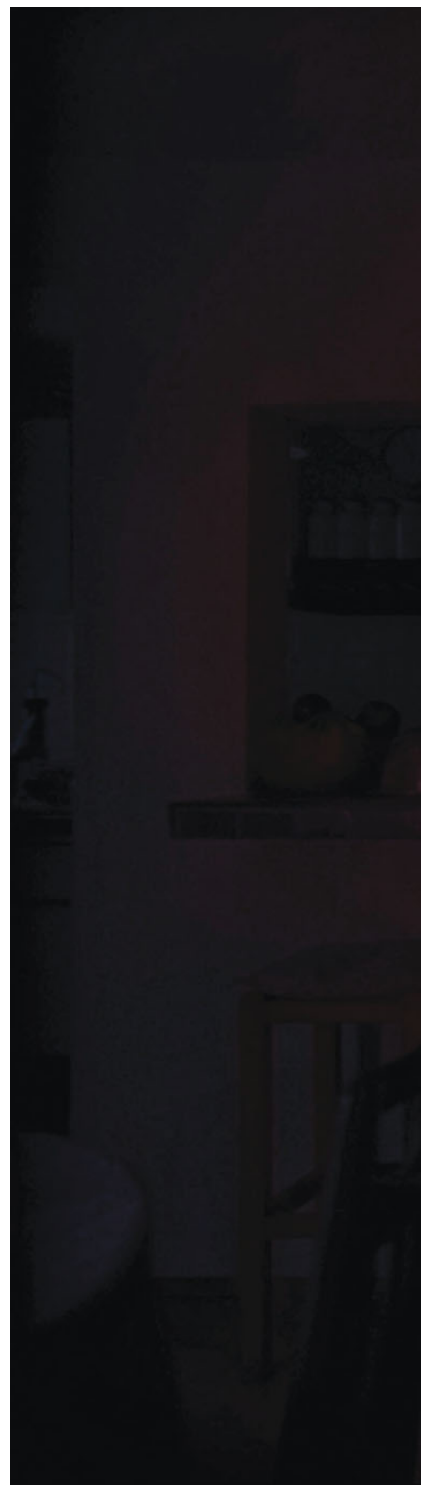
Fernanda Solórzano: The main characters of your films are usually men in desperate situations who carry out some extreme – and liberating – action. However, Juan doesn't seek change; instead, he attracts the tragic event that will transform everybody's lives.

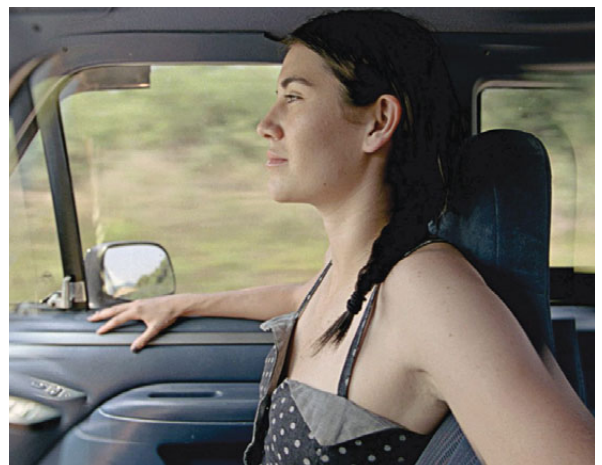
Carlos Reygadas: What happens is random, but characteristic of the circumstances we're living in. It's a consequence of the clash of cosmogonies ever present in our country, which hasn't been resolved since Mexico's destruction [by the Spanish conquerors] 490 years ago.

FS: The ambiguous relationship between employer and employee recurs in your films. Is this tension greater between the people born in Tepoztlán and the people from Mexico City who have moved there?

CR: That kind of relationship could develop anywhere in Mexico. Between a gardener and you, for example. There is such thing as a *tepostizo* society, but that's not the main topic of my film. That relationship you talk

DEMONIC INFLUENCE
In *'Post Tenebras Lux'*, a toolbox-carrying devil, above, visits the middle-class household of Juan (Adolfo Jiménez Castro, near right) and Natalia (Nathalia Acevedo, far right)





about – friendly and detached at the same time – is distinctive of the Occidental outlook, which prevails upon others. You can see how Juan and his family are kind to Siete [their employee], but they also behave arrogantly. Siete shows them submission, even though he tries to disguise it. I don't want to be a determinist and say that what eventually happens to Juan represents retaliation from the oppressed classes. It's an issue that transcends contemporary social divisions.

FS: I couldn't help but think of 'This Is My Kingdom' ('Este es mi reino'), the short film you made for the collective project *Revolución* as the seed of 'Post Tenebras Lux'. You could observe the ambivalence we're talking about there.

CR: The topic has been present in my films, but I've refined it. *Japón* suggested that you could drive 50 miles away from Mexico City and find such a different cosmogony that you could feel you were in a different country. That was a more metaphorical approach. In *Post Tenebras Lux* I don't deal with the concept in a schematic way, but as an existential aspect of reality. I wouldn't call it an ambivalent relationship. It has very complex rules that only Mexicans – or Latin Americans – are able to identify.

FS: When the film premiered in Cannes it provoked contrasting reactions among critics. Those who didn't like it described it as incomprehensible. Could it be that the complexity of these rules is one of the reasons why foreign audiences find the film obscure?

CR: Probably. The topic of beheading, for example, is very ingrained in Mexican culture but not necessarily known in other countries. On the other hand, any reasonably informed person would know that beheadings are intrinsic to our culture and history. However, I read reviews from critics who had seen the film in Canada or Russia who made references to a mixed-race, post-colonial society.

FS: The president of the jury in Cannes, Nanni Moretti, said your film caused a great division between the judges. What do you think were the arguments against it?

CR: Word always gets out. I know some of them liked it a lot, while the others simply loathed it. I would call the latter "the Ewan McGregor bunch" – members of the jury who think that movies have to be a certain way. They believe that circumstances surrounding the story must always be clearly established, that characters have to be neatly introduced to the audience, flashbacks must always be defined as that, etc. To them, if a film is confusing – in the fashion of [Christopher] Nolan's *Memento* – then it must become clear that confusion is the subject-matter. When they watch something different they think the director tried to make a film and didn't know how to. I'm not saying I'm breaking moulds. Filmmakers have been offering audiences a different experience from way back.

FS: 'Post Tenebras Lux' features your own kids (with their real-life names), the main character's wife has the same name as your wife (Natalia), and you've let people know that you live in the town where the action takes place. Would it be far-fetched to say that Juan is your alter ego?

CR: Yes, it would be far-fetched. I've posed myself questions more similar to the ones that haunted the characters of *Japón* and *Silent Light*. The parallels between my life and Juan's were not intended.

FS: Didn't you foresee that people would read your film as autobiographical?

CR: Yes, but I wasn't concerned. If I gave my kids different names for the film they wouldn't react when needed.



And the actress who plays the wife is *also* called Natalia. I was planning to give her character a different name, but since my kids call her by her name, I realised it would not work. A person is not defined by where he lives, how he dresses, if he owns any dogs, or if he visits swingers' clubs. People are defined by their values, not only morally speaking. In that very essential aspect, Natalia and Juan are not like me. They embody a defining characteristic of Occidental lifestyle. They're people who are unsatisfied on a spiritual level. I may also have unmet needs, but not of the same kind.

FS: In your films, and this is no exception, you show non-actors while they're totally drunk – usually countrymen. Some people condemn this and say it's exploitative.

CR: Whoever thinks that is a moralist and a hypocrite.

FS: Why don't you ask them to act? If they're not actors, you could help them build a certain emotional state without getting them drunk.

CR: If I were of indigenous descent no one would make that claim against me. That type of accusation is made by people who don't know how to treat others like equals. They feel guilty about it, so they blame someone else.

FS: Still, drunkenness puts them in an extremely vulnerable position. They talk about very personal issues.

CR: Maybe there are people who think that inebriation is an ungraceful state. I get drunk once in a while and don't regard it as undignified – quite the opposite. So I don't see what the problem is. Besides, I also shoot scenes where the so-called rich characters are drunk in real life.

FS: Not in 'Post Tenebras Lux'...

CR: I did in one of the Christmas dinner scenes where Juan's family and friends are gathered – one of the non-actors approaches the others and behaves annoyingly. Since he's closer to your social class you're more familiar with his drunkenness.

FS: I'll concede that I didn't notice him or his behaviour didn't disturb me. What I did notice was an underlying violence in everything the characters do in the film. It emanates from the fireworks they play with, the boys

Maybe there are people who think inebriation is an ungraceful state. I get drunk once in a while and don't regard it as undignified – quite the opposite

training for a rugby match and the competitive tone of their conversations.

CR: It's the exact same case, just the other way around: you felt that way because maybe they're closer to your class. Violence permeates every human interaction, no matter the social rank – at least on this side of the world.

FS: I'm talking about a more sophisticated kind of violence – sublimated, we might say.

CR: I didn't intend it that way. I chose rugby because it's a sport I love. I regard those boys as men who are about to lose some of their purity in order to become unsatisfied adults. *Post Tenebras Lux* deals with the loss of innocence.

FS: One of the most discussed elements of the film is the presence of a CGI devil. You've stated that it could mean anything, since it's only the dream of one of the kids. But isn't it inevitable to associate it with evil?

CR: Not necessarily. Instead of the devil, it could have been a turtle that suddenly stood on her hind legs and walked into the parents' bedroom. The fact that a dream is not explained won't stop me from making it part of the story. And, well, I don't see him as a 'mean' devil. He's not violent or disagreeable. He's not threatening the child.

FS: The immediate next scene is of a man cutting down a tree. You could see why it's not difficult to associate the devil with destruction...

CR: In Mexican rural environments it's not unusual to see men logging trees just to get the chunks of wood that women use in their *anafes* [rudimentary stoves]. It's tragic and still no one has seen my ecologist stance.

FS: It's very clear. There are scenes where the logging of trees is the topic of discussion.

CR: And still I wouldn't associate it with evil. Tree logging by men in Mexico has more to do with ignorance. In any case, the owners of forest-exploitation industries – who burn down forests and then log the trees – have a clearer knowledge of the implications of their actions. However, I don't believe in notions of good and evil. There are good and bad deeds, but that's a different thing.

FS: The scenes that are unmistakably disturbing are the ones related to animal cruelty. You've mentioned before they refer to the loss of the sacrality that used to be present in the ancient Mexicans' relationship with nature.

CR: Yes, and still I wouldn't make a moral judgement. We don't quite realise how cultural devastation permeates our daily existence. There's cruelty to animals depicted in the film, but the characters don't regard it as that. For them it's almost natural – part of a *ladino* culture [in this

sentence, *ladino* means both cunning and mestizo] in which the main goal is to destroy everything as soon as possible, and where everybody is shortsighted.

FS: But Juan's viciousness to his dogs goes beyond that. The implications seem a lot more problematic.

CR: He's frustrated. Just as he [gets it out of his system] by hitting his dogs, others do it by insulting each other while driving and others by being mean to their partners. Some Anglo-Saxon critics have called Juan a "psychopath animal torturer" – which is an overstatement.

FS: He may not be a psychopath – he regrets his actions, after all – but his behaviour has a pathological side.

CR: Obviously his behaviour towards the dogs is reprehensible, but to me it's not something to be outraged about. All of a sudden animal cruelty is considered the worst thing in the world, while laying off hundreds of workers while not giving them redundancy pay is not seen as something a psychopath would do. Everything that serves society's main purpose – to make money – is hidden behind by a veil of permissiveness. Therefore, the so-called evilness comes down to issues of self-righteousness or sentimentality (like saying black instead of African-American, or the act of hitting an animal). I don't know why people fixate on the scene of Juan and his dog.

FS: It shows a real dark side to the character. Not even he can explain it.

CR: It's not hitting the dogs that he finds strange – it's beating the dog he loves the most.

FS: Well, that's the dark side.

CR: It's the kind of pathology common to everybody.

FS: Of all your films I find the opening sequence of 'Post Tenebras Lux' the most powerful. We see a little girl surrounded by dogs and animals – some tame, some wild – in a landscape that is peaceful at first and then threatening. It's a visual prologue and a synthesis of the story. Did you conceive it like that?

CR: No. I love that piece of land and go there every evening. I love those animals. I wanted to make a film that started by showing those things only because I wanted to share them. I envisioned the night falling, and having my daughter standing there saying things like "mom" or "dad". It's true that it's a synthesis, but I didn't plan it rationally. That sequence resolves the beauty of childhood and the beauty of living with the danger inherent to life, and with the necessity of death.

i 'Post Tenebras Lux' is released in the UK on 22 March, and is reviewed on page 101

BATTLE ON EARTH
Reygadas, left, hints at life's underlying violence in scenes of boys playing rugby, below left, and of his daughter Rut surrounded by animals, below right



INDIAN INK

The art of film advertising in India is admired and exoticised in the West for its bright colours, kitsch style and general exuberance. But just like its Western counterpart, it has an aesthetic trajectory that reflects the impact of technological advancement, highlights social and political concerns, and reflects the zeitgeist. Its iconic designs provide rich materials through which to read the history of India's national cinema.

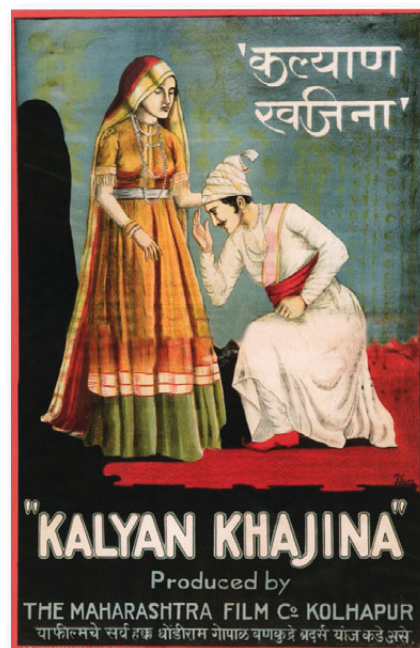
Released in 1913, the first Indian feature film *Raja Harishchandra* was advertised as “a performance with 57,000 photographs, a picture two miles long”. The reference to photography informed an audience unfamiliar with this new medium that film had the ability to capture reality and bring static images to life; the emphasis on length appealed to an audience used to watching stage plays lasting more than six hours. Such text-based advertisements were placed in newspapers or printed as hand-bills and distributed from bullock-carts decorated with hand-painted banners. The move from text to image-based promotional materials came in the 1920s with the gradual incorporation of decorative fonts, line illustrations and woodcut images. *Raja Harishchandra* was based on a subject from Hindu mythology, a genre of film that evolved over the years to inspire aesthetically diverse and striking posters, like the one for *Champakali* (1957).

The earliest surviving image-based Indian film poster is that for Baburao Painter's 1924 film *Kalyan Khajina*. Stylistically it was a clumsy fusion of 17th-century Mughal painting and the Western realism then being taught at the Bombay School of Art, but it's a demonstration of the era's experimentation in an attempt to define a new 'modern' national art. The 1930s saw the arrival of the sound film, increased mechanisation and an expansion of the industry, manifested in the building of a series of Art Deco-style cinemas in Mumbai. The movement symbolised modernity and progress, and film graphics reflected this through their stylised imagery and geometric typography.

Also produced during this period, but not adhering to any one style, were a series of posters for films featuring Fearless Nadia, an Australian circus artist who became the most famous actress in India of the time. In these films she had swordfights, cracked whips and balanced on top of moving trains, continually challenging female stereotypes. The posters, showing her in

Works of great beauty and artistry in their own right, Indian film posters also give fascinating insights into the transformation of the nation's film industry and culture in the century since the subcontinent's very first feature film was released in 1913

By Divia Patel



1. KALYAN KHAJINA (THE TREASURES OF KALYAN)

BABURAO PAINTER, 1924
This poster depicts the 17th-century Maratha emperor Shivaji. It is sometimes attributed to the director of the film, a self-taught painter and sculptor. Here he seems to be experimenting with a fusion of Mughal painting and Western realism.

2. ANARKALI

BOLLYWOOD ART PROJECT, 2012
This Mumbai mural celebrating Nandlal Jaswantlal's 1953 classic and its stars Bina Rai and Pradeep Kumar was painted over the course of 11 days by Ranjit Dahiya of the Bollywood Art Project. The urban collective are reviving the tradition of hand-painting large-scale billboards and banners, used by many studios during Bollywood's Golden Age.





3.

3. MAZHA MULGA (MY SON) J.B. DIKSHIT, 1938
Art Deco-influenced graphics represented modernity and progress. Here, this is expressed in the design of the Hindi and English typefaces and the pictorial depiction of a mechanical cog that references the printing-press setting of the film. The Prabhat studio logo of a 'Tutari girl' in the top left-hand corner heralded the arrival of sound in cinemas.



4.

action, represented courage, strength and idealism; they were fantasies of power and action, which fed into the nascent nationalist movement.

After Indian independence in 1947, many films explored concepts of national identity, modernity and tradition through the narrative prism of rural-to-urban migration: RK Films' *Boot Polish* (1954) and *Shree 420* (1955), and Mehboob Productions' *Mother India* (1957). RK was defined by its two leading stars Nargis and Raj Kapoor, who were first paired in *Barsaat* (1949) and went on to achieve international fame.

One of the most enduring of all Indian film posters is for *Mother India*. The film focuses on Radha (Nargis), a poor woman who shows great courage and moral resolve as she overcomes a series of trials to become the revered 'mother' of her village. The village setting portrays an ideal moral universe that evokes a powerful sense of national identity. The original poster for the film was a simple image of a mother and child. The studio redesigned the poster in the 1980s to reflect both the epic nature of the film and the iconic status it had achieved over the years. In the new poster, Radha's heroic struggles were immortalised in an inspirational image showing her pulling a plough with her bare hands across the fields, pain and anguish etched on her face. It stood for endurance, power and an idealised vision of Indian morality.

Films of the 1960s displayed a more international outlook, with youth culture, travel and freedom from the past emerging as subjects for exploration. Foreign locations and Western fashion trends seeped into Indian film culture, as can be witnessed in the poster for Raj Kapoor's *Bobby* (1973), with its echoes of American psychedelic posters. A new genre of film appeared in the 1970s, characterised by themes of revenge and violence, and the arrival of a new type of protagonist – the antihero. These films were a response to the political, economic and social upheavals occurring in India at the time. Playing the role of the angry young man, Amitabh Bachchan rose to fame in films such as *Deewaar* (1975) and *Sholay* (1975). A new graphic style developed that suited the anger and aggression of the films. The artist Diwakar



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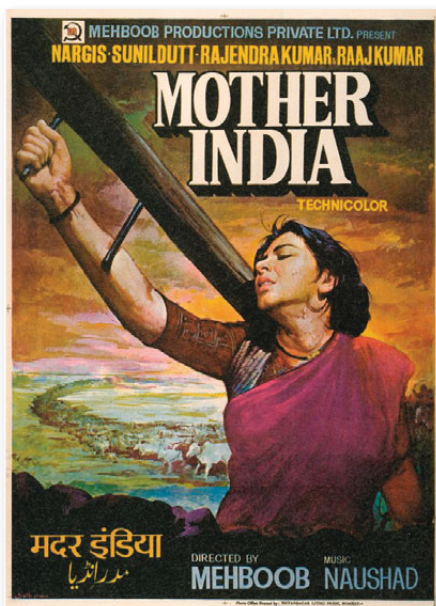
4. TOOFANI TIRANDAAZ ARTIST UNKNOWN, 1947
From the 1930s to the 1950s, Australian actress and former circus artist Mary Evans, aka Fearless Nadia, made over 50 films, only a few of which still survive. Posters, in all manner of styles, are some of the only traces that remain of these lost action adventures. Many of the designs challenged female stereotypes, showing the whip-cracking heroine (who performed all of her own stunts) brandishing swords, guns and arrows.



6.

5. BARSAAAT (RAIN) TUILKA, 1949
The poster depicts Raj Kapoor, who plays a musician in the film, holding a violin in one hand and a fainting woman – his leading lady Nargis – in the other. The image represents the great love between the two stars, on screen and off, and was stylised and reduced to a simple form to become the logo of Kapoor's RK Films, symbolising the studio's first success.

6. CHAMPAKALI RAMKUMAR SHARMA, 1957
Films based on religious epics and mythology were a fixture of Indian cinema from the silent era to the B movies of the 1960s and 70s. The ornate revivalist style of this 1957 poster was typical of the illustrator Ramkumar Sharma, a poster artist who had a passion for Indian history and mythology.



7.



8.

7. MOTHER INDIA

BALKRISHNA VAIDYA—
SETH STUDIOS, 1980S/
GULATRI ARTS, 1957

This simple image encapsulates the theme of Mehboob's film: a tale of a mother, her children and the land on which she lives. The film soon became a national classic and the poster was redesigned in the 1980s to reflect its new status. The image depicts the heroine's struggle to feed her children, their cries giving her the 'strength of a man' to plough the land. The rough, exaggerated brush strokes have an expressionist feel, reflecting the epic nature of the film and conveying her courage, strength and moral duty.

8. KAGAZ KE PHOOL (PAPER FLOWERS)

ELLORA ARTS, 1959

The title of Guru Dutt's film alludes to the artificial world created by the film industry in which people are "like flowers of paper, beautiful to behold but artificial nevertheless and without fragrance". At the centre of this highly poignant narrative is an intense relationship, the passion, anguish and sorrow of which are conveyed through simple, bold imagery.

9. CHARULATA

SATYAJIT RAY, 1964

Ray, who worked as a graphic designer before venturing into filmmaking, designed many of his own posters. Just as his films were far removed from Bollywood cinema, so his simple, graphic style – using brush strokes, photo cut-outs and even occasionally his own typography – differed drastically from the exuberant imagery of Bollywood posters.

10. GUIDE

D.R. BHOSLE, 1965

Compared to the crowded 'masala' style of many posters of the time, D.R. Bhosle's oil-painted images often featured a single, expressive figure set against a stark background. Bhosle worked initially as a studio boy, developing a love of Bollywood art from mentors such as the filmmaker Baburao Painter.

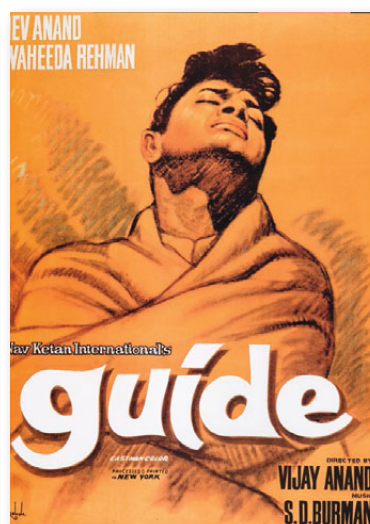
11. BOBBY

TILAK—TIRATH—
OBEROI, 1973

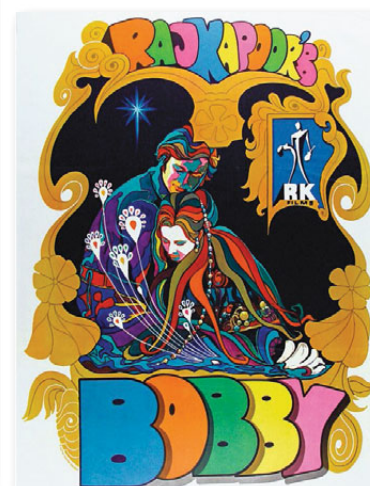
The poster for this hit teen romance mimicked psychedelic posters for US films, the swirling bands of colour and expressive typography capturing both the energy of youth culture and the spirit of post-independence liberalism.



9.



10.



11.

Karkare was responsible for this stylistic change, creating what has come to be seen as the definitive aesthetic of the Indian film poster. He refined the technique of painting bold, exaggerated brushstrokes over photographic stills to create dynamic and expressive images that convey the emotional intensity of the films.

Themes of love and romance are a staple of Indian cinema and some of the most striking posters, such as those for *Kagaz ke Phool* (1959) and *Guide* (1965), convey the passion and anguish of love in a very simple dramatic image. The depiction of women in posters often relied on a simplistic differentiation between 'modern' and 'traditional' characters through their dress. The figure of the courtesan, as seen in *Umrao Jaan* (1981), offered a more complex exploration of sexuality and tradition.

Regional and alternative cinemas contributed to the diversity of film-poster art. Satyajit Ray, for example, designed the posters for his own films, conveying their social-realist themes in a graphic language that was bold, simple and direct. Hand-painted hoardings, once the defining feature of the Indian cinema experience, have long been a dying artform, but some artists such as the Bangalore-based Ramachandraiah continue the technique while developing a distinct individual style.

Indian filmmaking changed dramatically in the 1990s, with themes reflecting the impact of the post-liberalisation, globalisation era. Advertising paralleled these changes with the development of new technologies and the arrival of new digital photographic and design techniques. Today Indian posters match the slick sophistication of their Hollywood counterparts.

i The exhibition 'Bollywood Icons: 100 Years of Indian Cinema', featuring many of these posters, is at the National Media Museum, Bradford until 16 June. A selection of Indian films, including 'Mother India', will screen at the Bradford International Film Festival, from 11 to 21 April. For more information, see nationalmediamuseum.org.uk

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14. PAAR (THE CROSSING)
UNKNOWN ARTIST, 1984
Goutam Ghose's film about a landlord's brutal treatment of rural villagers is an important work of the Parallel Cinema movement, and the artwork clearly signposts the film as distinct from mainstream Hindi cinema. The poverty-stricken couple at the film's centre are rendered in a stark, dramatic style, while the herd of pigs (which play a key role in the narrative) are shown in silhouette, in an imaginative, surreal touch.

15. DON 2
RAMACHANDRAIAH, 2012
Since 1971, artist Ramachandraiah has been producing hand-drawn posters out of a factory north of Bangalore. Using an old lithograph press, he prints them on cheap, thin paper and then posts them all over the walls of Bangalore, where his lovingly crafted interpretations of popular Bollywood and Hollywood hits sit alongside the official, sleek (but somewhat soulless) digital creations of the studios.



12.



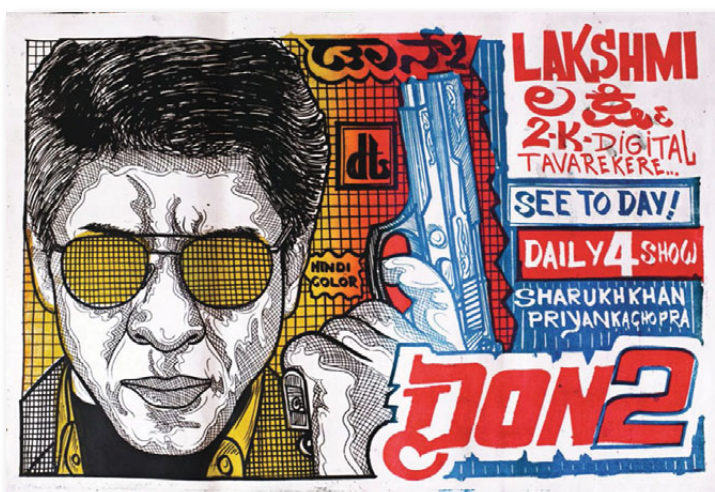
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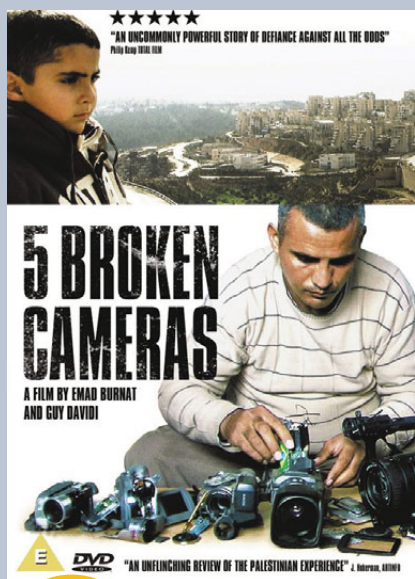
12. DEEWAAR (THE WALL)
DIWAKAR KARKARE, 1975
The artist's distinctive technique of painting exaggerated brush strokes over photographic portraits helps create an emotionally charged image. Here, Amitabh Bachchan's facial expression is enhanced by emphasising his brooding eyes and full lips. The half-blue, half-red face represents the struggle between good and bad within one person. Such dramatic depictions helped create Bachchan's angry-young-man persona.

13. UMRao JAAN
VASUDEO, 1981
The visual representation of courtesans – who are part of a rich cultural tradition rather than suggestive of immorality – usually focuses on their heavily embroidered costumes, ornate jewellery and their placement within grand historical settings.



15.

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★★★★★

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Philip French, The Observer

★★★★★

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The Independent



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● Includes an interview with
Andrei Zvyagintsev

Elena

Andrei Zvyagintsev

This, the third film from the director of *The Return*, won the Certain Regard Special Jury Prize in Cannes, and Nadezhda Markina as *Elena* has also won several Best Actress awards for her performance. Elena and Vladimir are unequal partners in their 2nd marriage, he rich, she a former nurse. When Vladimir has a heart-attack, Elena realises she must act to safeguard the future of her family.

★★★★★

'The subtlety and stealth of this movie is a marvel... superbly shot and directed... deeply satisfying'

Peter Bradshaw
The Guardian

★★★★★

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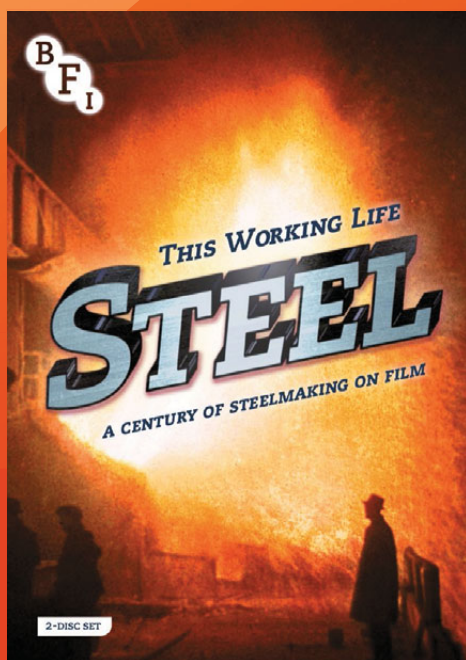
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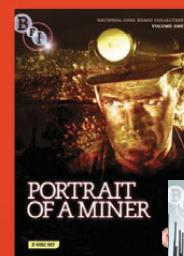
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DANNY BOYLE

Following his glittering success with the Olympics opening ceremony and consequent elevation to the status of national treasure, Danny Boyle has returned to much darker matters. Inspired by the work of Nicolas Roeg, his new film *Trance* is set in London, but it's not a celebration of the city – it's a film that even the director describes as “cruel”. **Interview by Ryan Gilbey**

Danny Boyle is an openly populist filmmaker who works on a modest scale. Though he has stayed in Britain, he has international reach: *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) won eight Academy Awards, including Best Picture, not to mention an incalculable amount of audience goodwill. This can only have increased after Boyle impersonated Tigger during his Best Director acceptance speech. Even with the novelty doorstop of an Oscar to his name, he has shown no desire to throw in his lot with Hollywood. Instead of capitalising on the *Slumdog* razzle-dazzle he made a film about a man sawing off his arm (*127 Hours*).

This may sound perverse, but it is consistent. Boyle's background is theatre (he returned last year for a production of *Frankenstein* with Benedict Cumberbatch and Jonny Lee Miller alternating the roles of doctor and creature) and television (he produced Alan Clarke's *Elephant*). Cinema audiences got their first hint of Boyle's unpredictability when he followed an electrifying adaptation of Irvine Welsh's smack odyssey *Trainspotting* (1995) with *A Life Less Ordinary* (1997), which included elements of comedy, fantasy, road movie and musical. Since then, it's been anything goes. Why not work with Leonardo DiCaprio (*The Beach*) or make a zombie movie (*28 Days Later...*)? Why not mastermind the opening ceremony of the London 2012 Olympic Games?

The latter was a widely adored extravaganza crammed with masterstrokes: Kenneth Branagh as Isambard Kingdom Brunel, J.K. Rowling reading *Peter Pan* to bedridden children haunted by a giant Voldemort, Rowan Atkinson as Mr Bean playing Vangelis's 'Chariots of Fire' and Daniel Craig as James Bond escorting a parachute-packing HRH Elizabeth II to the stadium. Boyle's national-treasure status could only have been boosted by turning down a subsequent OBE to remain a man of

the people – which he then proceeded to do. Politicians, companies, even entire countries must look upon his PR skills and marvel.

But as he suggests below, it is no accident that this joyful period has also produced his murkiest film, the psychological thriller *Trance*. It features Cronenbergian violence, a mosaic-style structure indebted to Nicolas Roeg and an approach to characterisation that verges on the kamikaze – even Boyle calls the

film “cruel”. The location is still London, but the tone couldn't be further from celebration. James McAvoy plays an art auctioneer who colludes with a gangster (Vincent Cassel) in the theft of a painting by Goya (“the first great painter of the human mind”), only to develop amnesia after hiding the canvas. The only hope of retrieving his memory, and therefore the painting, lies with an American hypnotherapist (Rosario Dawson). What she finds in his subconscious would make Goya shudder...

Ryan Gilbey: ‘*Trance*’ was made in quite an unorthodox way. Did you shoot it all, then come back to edit it after the Olympics?

Danny Boyle: We shot it and did a very rough cut, which you do anyway as you're shooting to make sure there are no enormous gaps. Then we put it to bed almost immediately, and effectively took eight months or so off from it before going back. When I got offered the opening ceremony, I'd already committed to do the play *Frankenstein* at the National. The ceremony took two years to prep, and it was so enjoyable doing *Frankenstein* that we decided we wanted to shoot a film as well, ie to take another little sabbatical from the Olympics. The Games just drive you insane: it's all so committee-oriented, so slow, and most of the time you're not working. I was working with the same people so we thought we'd take a little time out and make this film, which we'd been working on for a number of years. [Screenwriter] John Hodge had done a fantastic draft, and we were going to shoot it in Manhattan with an English actress, because that character was always meant to be an outsider so her voice had to have a separateness. With Rosario [Dawson] in the part and the whole thing in London, it's got these connotations of Californian therapists who believe that as long as you keep talking you'll find the solution. So we went off and shot this, but we couldn't leave the Olympic Games completely, so

ON THE BOYLE

“The energy you see on screen is the energy in life. Like any world-class director, he's an obsessive. He's obsessed with film, with music and with family.”

Andrew Macdonald, 1999

“I would jump through hoops of fire backwards for Danny Boyle. I would do ‘Porno’ [Irvine Welsh's sequel to ‘Trainspotting’] tomorrow for nothing. Begbie was probably the only character I would ever want to revisit, because I do believe that there's an awful lot more mileage there. Danny seems to be edging towards it. After his success at the Oscars, he should be able to do pretty much as he wants.”

Robert Carlyle, 2009

“Danny Boyle and Stephen Daldry created something very special... that level of approval is not what most opening ceremonies get. The creativity Danny brought, and the filmmaker's eye with which he saw it, set it apart.”

Sebastian Coe, 2012





1994: 'Shallow Grave'



1995: 'Trainspotting'



1997: 'A Life Less Ordinary'




2000: 'The Beach'



2001: 'Strumpet'



2001: 'Vacuuming Completely Nude in Paradise'

 we had to do a day a week on that. And then we came back to *Trance* afterwards. Given how complicated the story is, it was probably a good thing, because you did forget it all. It's the first time I've forgotten what I'd shot.

RG: That's appropriate for a film partly about amnesia.

DB: It was very fitting. We did it for our convenience and to keep us all sane during the Olympics. It just worked well in our favour because of the sort of film it was. Usually you go straight into editing unless you're doing *Cast Away* or *Raging Bull*, where the actor goes off to lose or gain weight. Normally there's no way your financiers want their money tied up for a year. The Olympics was very useful there because it mesmerises people a bit and they take their eye off the ball. You say: "Yeah, we're gonna shoot this film, then we'll go away and do the opening ceremony then come back and edit it." Somehow no one realises they're going to have to wait a hell of a lot longer before they see anything.

RG: How soon did you get back to 'Trance'?

DB: Almost immediately. I stayed in London for the Olympics because I had some tickets.

RG: Did you manage to bag a few freebies, then?

DB: No, I'd actually applied for them! Someone gave me a tip that you should apply for far more than you want and then you'd get something. I applied for £20,000 of tickets or something, and got £1,500 worth. So I stayed, and it was amazing going as a punter. The people had really taken it all over, this group mentality, and when they booed politicians, it was a way of saying, "Don't fuck about with this. This is ours. You can be part of it, but keep your modesty about you." Then I went away for a few weeks on holiday after that, then we started straight back on *Trance*. We edited from September for three months.

RG: How did it look to you?

DB: I thought it was good. The story worked. It's weird doing this sort of film because directors usually think they're giving too many clues, and everyone else says, "No, you're not giving enough!" There's a story about M. Night Shyamalan making *The Sixth Sense* and worrying that when the kid says "I see dead people" it was giving away the whole film. So a significant part of editing we did when we came back to *Trance* was putting clues back in that I'd taken out. We did a week of pickups and reshoots in mid-October where we just dropped in little clues to try and help you steer your way through it. The idea is that you shouldn't have to watch the film twice to understand it, but that if you do, it'll still make sense.

RG: You gave a wonderful speech at Nicolas Roeg's BAFTA tribute, and there were clips from his films in the opening ceremony. 'Trance' is your Roeg film, isn't it?

DB: Absolutely. That's exactly it. When you're preparing the publicity, everyone's going, "It's *Memento*, it's *Inception*, it's *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*." You go, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, it's all those films." But the godfather of all that is Nicolas Roeg, the great iconoclast, who took time and twisted and stretched it. The point about film editing is that it's so fluid. If you get into a mesmerising film, get into the right rhythm with it, you will accept a fluid sense of past, present and future; it all becomes interchangeable, as you can see in Roeg's films. There are various tropes in *Trance*: the heist, the stolen painting, the amnesia, the femme

fatale. But they're all macguffins. They're bollocks, basically. It's not really about stolen paintings at all; it's about someone whose memories are stolen. The painting is there just as an object of desire for different people.

RG: Has Roeg seen the film?

DB: I wouldn't show it to Nic! What if he hated it? I remember going to see *Eureka* at the Screen on the Hill in London on a Wednesday afternoon, it was practically empty but the air was just sucked out of the cinema. I was mesmerised. That's what Roeg's films do to me; I'm a rabbit in the headlights. This is really what film is: it's a hypnotically induced trance. Those people on screen are not really moving, you know. You just think they are. Your brain is telling you they are.

RG: One connection the film has to Roeg and to the Olympics is David Bowie. There were rumours he would be in the ceremony. But he's there in spirit in 'Trance', isn't he? When James McAvoy is injured, he looks like Bowie on the cover of 'Lodger'; there's a snatch of 'Be My Wife' from 'Low' on the soundtrack; and a key line about people not being heroes.

DB: That's right. I had to bring in the *Lodger* cover, because when I said, "I want him to lie down like on the cover of *Lodger*," everyone looked at me blankly. 'Be My Wife' is there as a sample on the Unkle track. When we started doing the music with [composer] Rick [Smith], it was very *Low*-influenced, but it ended up being more of a pulse – a mix of electronic and strings, rather than the distorted guitars we had planned.

I got to meet Bowie for the first time when we were prepping the opening ceremony. Growing up, he was everything, so I can't tell you how nervous I was. He wouldn't do live performance so we couldn't get him, but he gave it his blessing. There was a lot of hassle involved in doing the opening ceremony, but meeting

When you make those big films, the degree of certainty you've got to have is enormous, and I would not be good at that



2002: '28 Days Later...'



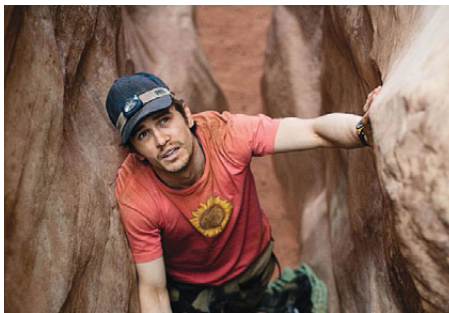
2004: 'Millions'



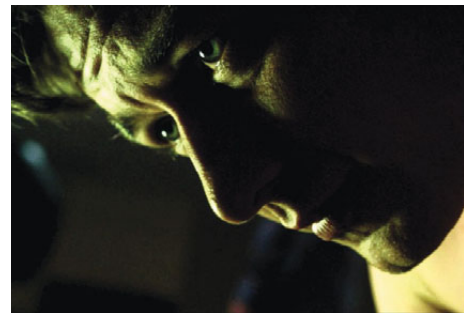
2007: Sunshine



2008: 'Slumdog Millionaire'



2010: '127 Hours'



2013: Trance

him was one of the joys. If only we could have got him there, it would've been great.

RG: The music holds the film together when the narrative is at its most complicated.

DB: Yes, Rick does a fantastic job holding you, particularly in the MRI scan scene, which shifts backwards and forwards in time; the music is absolutely the glue there. That particular sequence is actually three substantial scenes intercut; that's very much our Roeg tribute. Every time that comes on, I always think: "This is for Nic."

RG: Hypnosis is important to the plot, but how clinically sound is the movie?

DB: It's certainly plausible. There is such a thing as post-hypnotic suggestion. It's one of the reasons why hypnotism was discredited in the 1970s in legal cases, because it was proved that it did work. But it's not a film that's about realism. It's more the nature of our minds that we're exploring here. So I wouldn't make any claims for it being watertight! But it's pretty good. We had a professor of psychology who read the script and said: "Yes, that's how it works." James's character is one of the five per cent of the population who are highly suggestible. These are the people that Derren Brown picks out of his audience. We

went to see him before we did the film – he's absolutely brilliant. I can judge when people are acting; I'm sensitive to that because of my job. And those people are not acting. They're not stooges. They're lost in his worlds. But the trick is selecting them. If he says, "The first people who, blah-blah-blah..." and four or five people's hands shoot up immediately, he knows they're the most suggestible ones. They're the ones who want to be lost.

RG: Is it a risk that with so much of the action of 'Trance' taking place in people's heads – ie not physically happening at all – the audience won't care?

DB: It is, except that one of the reasons I wanted to do it is that we wanted to not make it stable who you're going to root for – not make it a foregone conclusion. So you have to go into this film knowing it's not a heart-warming exercise in empathy: it's your decision whom you're going to follow and trust – and can you work out the puzzle? It's a serious question in America, because they tend to want desperately to have that empathy, and it's not that sort of film. It's got a slightly crueller nature. And it isn't trustworthy. Eventually you're giving people licence to say: "This may be happening, this may not."

RG: It's got the ultimate unreliable narrator.

DB: And he's fucking brilliant, McAvoy. It's an impossible part, and because he's so brilliant, he's trying to keep your sympathy for him, make you feel you can trust him despite all the stuff that's going on. He's a seriously good actor and he wants to stretch himself; he no longer wants to play the cute boy, he wants to do something darker and he's got a number of films coming out where he does that. With Vincent [Cassell], it was great to use his gangster persona and then put that into something unexpected, because his story here is actually a love story. He's offered the potential in life



Roeg trader: Boyle admits 'Trance' is his Nicolas Roeg film rather than his 'Inception' or 'Memento'

for love and it shocks him, more than violence, power, terrorising people. And I always thought Rosario was really underused in films. She did amazing work in John Madden's *Killshot*, where she does some proper character work – when she gets killed in that film, it's really disturbing. I thought it would be fantastic for *Trance* to take this part that for some people would seem like a femme fatale – and we do play with that idea – but to cast a modern American rather than some icy blonde.

RG: How did you approach shooting London? It's a very science-fiction vision of the city.

DB: I wanted it to be like Singapore. But the basic idea is really similar to the voiceover at the start of *Shallow Grave*: "This could be any city – they're all the same." I wanted it to feel like it's just a modern city, with three very distinctive spaces where the characters live. One is attached to the club Analog – a name I never thought we'd clear, but remarkably there isn't already a club with that name! Then Rosario's character has a space that's hollowed out of an old traditional Regency building in London. She's modernised it, given it this sheen; it's supposed to be a bit like the inside of James's brain. And he lives above the Docklands Light Railway, and that all looks a little like Singapore. We wanted to try to make London mythical. It was obviously easiest on *28 Days Later...*, where you have this great concept of the deserted city. I wanted to use the city here, but not in any stodgy, landmark way.

RG: Do you see much cross-pollination between 'Trance' and the opening ceremony?

DB: There is in the sense that when we came back to the film after the Games, I saw how fucked-up it was towards the end. The film gets very violent and deranged. It starts out playful – you've got the heist, the Bowie music, the humour – and then it's like "Woah!" and innocent people are being killed. [With] the Olympics you have this responsibility, because it's a family show – it's the British equivalent of a Disney movie. People shouldn't come to *Trance* expecting the opening ceremony! All the dark stuff that we couldn't put into the Olympics has ended up here. We were finding a release for that instinct.

RG: So 'Trance' is the opening ceremony's evil twin?

DB: That's a good way of putting it. I'll use that.

RG: You said earlier that there was a lot of hassle involved with the Olympics.

DB: When you get close to it, you realise it doesn't really deserve its mystique, I have to say. There's a side of it that is in no way admirable. And I found it difficult a couple of times to keep going. That I didn't stop was because of people's belief in it, which became to me more important than the corporation that runs it. I mean, the corporation is like Coca-Cola, and financially it's so powerful, that there are all sorts of things that it's difficult to interact with. The sinister side to it was the Rapier missiles mounted on rooftops in London – fucking ground-to-air missiles! You think: "This is a festival of peace!" The purpose is to put down arms. That's the origin of it, bringing nations together. You cannot justify protecting the

I've never wanted to do the same thing again. Whenever that's happened in any form, I've always come a cropper

whole Olympic experience with missiles. It's far better to accept the place might be bombed than to protect it with missiles.

RG: How has the opening ceremony changed the way people see you?

DB: You get some people coming up because of the films, but now people from all walks of life approach me, not for a photograph or anything but just to say thank you. Then they walk away. It's not like being congratulated on a film. It's almost nothing to do with you personally.

RG: Does your eclecticism in your choice of projects work against you when it comes to financing or marketing? You can't necessarily say, "If you liked 'Shallow Grave,' you'll love 'A Life Less Ordinary'!" You can't market '127 Hours' off the back of '28 Days Later...'; can you?

DB: No, but you lie to raise money. You lie all the time. I remember to sell *Slumdog Millionaire*, we said it was *Amélie* with a bit of *Trainspotting* thrown in. It is a problem. Especially now with *Trance*. In this country it doesn't matter – people will come along and not feel misled. But in America it matters because they sell *Slumdog* and *127 Hours* as warm-hearted redemptive stories and you go, "Er, I'm not sure." I mean, there are love stories in there somewhere, but it's not quite right. In America you're a number and you don't have an identity like you do here. But then I've never really wanted to do the same thing again. Whenever that's happened in any form, I've always come a cropper. Whenever you think, "Leave me alone, I know what I'm doing," it goes wrong.

I'll give you an example. We did the creatures in *28 Days Later...*, which were really good: they weren't the usual zombie walking-dead thing, they were much more electric and speedy and aggressive. But when we came to do *Sunshine*, we had this creature Pinbacker – Mark Strong's character – and I remember saying to the guys: "Oh, I know how to do this." And I didn't. When you have that arrogance it's deadly. I always believe you must approach something thinking: "How the fuck are we going to do that?" It should grow as you do it, and your ideas should come as late as possible, and as alarmingly and instinctively as possible. That tends to be where I work best. The not-knowing is energising.

RG: Is one film a reaction against next? The comparative minimalism of '127 Hours' felt like a response to the sprawl of 'Slumdog Millionaire'.

DB: That's part of the appeal. You get asked to repeat yourself a lot. It's what the whole system in America is based on: "He can do that – get him to do it again and offer him a lot more money." I always pull back from that. That's why the contrast with *127 Hours* was immense. It threw up technical challenges and I really love the technical side of things, the challenge of how to make a story flicker. What comes out of my theatre background is that I tend to leave the actors to do the characters, generally speaking; you cast it well with intelligent people who have an opinion about what they're doing. That comes from theatre where it's down to the actors to inhabit and own it.

The restriction in *127 Hours* was very exciting to me. I love that idea: just a man in a cave. You know you're going to cheat, which everyone does, but how much are you going to cheat and how will you make it feel to the audience like you're not?

RG: There are references in 'Trance' to Rembrandt's missing painting 'The Storm on the Sea of Galilee,' where he painted himself in



Non blonde: Rosario Dawson in 'Trance' offers a fresh take on the femme fatale role



Patriot games: Boyle says his hugely successful Olympic opening ceremony was the British equivalent to a Disney movie

the picture as one of the faces on the boat. That made me wonder: where are you in your films?

DB: I do connect with the films on a personal level in different ways. It's usually afterwards when I think: "Oh, that was probably me, then." Usually my films are quests. You think you're making different films and then sadly it turns out you're making the same one over and over! In *Trance*, what was interesting was that the role of hero was ambiguous or flexible. So I'm there in bits of *Trance*, but the most autobiographical one I've made – and I don't write any of them, but you try and bring something of yourself to them – is *Millions*. I regard that as my most personal film. Partly it's the Catholicism. There are lots of flavours in it. The boy's relationship with his mother. And he's driven by his imagination, which is an entirely good thing, while his brother's driven by money. I'm not very good with money; even though I've been lucky enough to have made some, it doesn't hold any fascination for me whether I've got it or not. So that's my most personal film in a way. But then no one saw it anyway so what does it matter? [laughs] A lot of right-wing groups in America loved it: I've got all these awards for it that nobody's heard about, from these positive-thinking religious groups who say what a warm-hearted tale *Millions* is. That's not quite how I saw it. Other than *Millions*, where I rather romantically imagine myself as the little kid, there isn't really a staple character in my work; it tends to flop around between different things. There's bits of *Trance* where I think of myself as Cassel – and who wouldn't when you're my age? It gets harder and harder to identify with your young heroes, who have to be there for the market. Films tend to be occupied with those guys in their twenties, early thirties, and it becomes more and more remote from you yet more and more commercially important in getting the films made.

RG: Is everything easier since 'Slumdog' and the Oscars? Can you basically do anything you want?

DB: To a degree. We have a deal where there's a cap of \$20 million on each film. If we make the film within that, we have a great deal of

freedom. Not complete freedom but a lot. If you want to go above that, you're always answerable to casting, because no one goes to see a film for the director unless it's Spielberg or Chris Nolan. So then that has implications for the type of story, and then you're in the dance of casting in America – and it is a dance. The reasons they do or don't do your film, you just can't work them out sometimes. Then you're answerable to the studio and how they're going to promote it, and *whether* they're going to promote it. It's a dance all the way through and you're never completely free. Having said that, we're very lucky having had a success like *Slumdog*. And because we refuse to inflate the budgets unnecessarily, it is more comfortable than it is for most people. If you stay modestly budgeted you can make the Oscar keep paying for you. I love Nolan's films, I love Ridley Scott, the big mega-budget films, but they're not where I

would be comfortable operating. I'm better on a more uncertain level; when you make those big films, the degree of certainty you've got to have is enormous, and I would not be good at that.

RG: Have you ever come close to having your head turned?

DB: Only after *Trainspotting*. I got offered *Alien Resurrection*. It wasn't the money that tempted me so much as the love of the story. Joss Whedon had written a really good script using the franchise in an interesting way, and I got close to doing that. I backed away in the end because I didn't really feel I could handle the mechanics of the whole set-up. You've got this huge operation and I like working within a smaller one. Even within the Olympics, we operated as a small unit, like a satellite within it. Or, if you didn't like us, a virus. ☹

i 'Trance' is released in the UK on 27 March, and is reviewed on page 107



Gangster's paradise: Boyle liked to imagine himself being Vincent Cassel, above, in 'Trance'

FOCUS

PORTUGAL WAS BORN HERE

As European Capital of Culture 2012, Guimarães received enough funding to make it the centre of the country's film production

By Jaime Pena

Guimarães is a small city in the north of Portugal, near Oporto, whose history can be traced back to the tenth century; not only did it play an important role in the founding of Portugal, but it also became the country's first capital. More recently, it was selected as European Capital of Culture 2012, together with Maribor in Slovenia. The foundation that organised the celebrations of Guimarães's city-of-culture status focused so much of its activity on producing films – mainly shorts – that Guimarães ended up being the main centre for film production in Portugal this past year; in fact, given the recent withdrawal of state funding for Portuguese cinema, there was little elsewhere. Practically every

Portuguese filmmaker of note has been involved in the Guimarães project, from veterans Manoel de Oliveira and João Botelho to up-and-comers Gabriel Abrantes and Gonçalo Tocha, as well as the likes of João Canijo, João Pedro Rodrigues, Margarida Gil, Pedro Costa and João Nicolau, together with celebrated directors from all over Europe.

The results of this ambitious undertaking, overseen by young producer Rodrigo Areias, began to emerge last November at the seventh edition of the Rome Film Festival, whose section Cinema XXI included four works produced by Guimarães 2012. These included the ambitious *Historic Centre*, a portmanteau film on the theme of memory that consists of four separate parts directed by, respectively, Pedro Costa, Manoel de Oliveira, Víctor Erice and Aki Kaurismäki. Other Guimarães films made a strong showing in Rotterdam this January, and there are more still to come (in Cannes perhaps?), including what will be without doubt the most extraordinary of all. Provisionally entitled *3X3D*, it groups together 3D films directed by Edgar Pêra,

Peter Greenaway and (one of the most eagerly anticipated events of 2013) Jean-Luc Godard.

The only name missing from this dazzling list is Portuguese director Miguel Gomes, who for the last year has been immersed in the promotion of *Tabu*. Nevertheless, the musical spirit of Gomes's cinema and his peculiar sense of humour seem to have infected Portugal's younger filmmakers. Gomes's influence seems noticeable in the absurd humour with which João Nicolau treats Guimarães's legends in *The Gift of Tears*; in the reinterpretation of the region's musical tradition that Tiago Pereira undertakes in *Let's Play Together to Hear Better*; and in the unshakeable scepticism with which Gonçalo Tocha flavours discussions of local history in *Towers and Comets*. While the

Costa's style seems more radical here than ever; rarely have his images and what his characters tell us fused so powerfully



Out of the past: 'Historic Centre' features contributions from Manoel de Oliveira, Víctor Erice, Aki Kaurismäki and Pedro Costa ('Sweet Exorcist', above)

majority of the Guimarães films average 20-30 minutes in length, Tocha's contribution is a 61-minute feature. As he already demonstrated with *It's the Earth Not the Moon*, an exhaustive portrait of the Isle of Corvo, Tocha has an admirable capacity to home in on those small but significant stories treasured by locals; stories that, in the case of Guimarães, have helped shape the history of a whole country. A text on the wall of a medieval tower situated in the city's main square informs us "Aqui nasceu Portugal" ("Portugal was born here"), and Guimarães's proud inhabitants don't intend to stop reminding us of that fact.

Unsurprisingly, most of the critical attention has focused on *Historic Centre*. As is often the case with this kind of collective film, *Historic Centre* is uneven. Two of the four episodes recycle themes already dealt with in other works, with a slightly perfunctory air. In 'Tavern Man', Aki Kaurismäki depicts a man as unfortunate in love as he is in business. Filmed in the historical centre of Guimarães, it stars Ilkka Koirula as a tavern-keeper unable to attract clients to his modest bar, whose elegance has an anachronistic air. Kaurismäki dispenses with dialogue, so his film could just as easily take place in his native Finland; only the incessant fado being played and the news on the radio refer unmistakably to Portugal. Kaurismäki spends a good part of each year in the north of Portugal, very close to Guimarães, and his film (which makes do with portraying the miserable daily life of a character and little else) seems the perfect vector for a tragic sense of life that nowadays traverses Europe from North to South and East to West – from Finland to Portugal, you could say.

Nor does Manoel de Oliveira go much further than mere jokiness in 'The Conquered Conqueror'. The conqueror of the title refers to Portugal's first king, Afonso Henriques, whose statue in Guimarães is "conquered nowadays by the tourists, who never stop taking pictures of it", as the tourist guide, played by Ricardo Trêpa, points out. It's difficult to shake off a sense of disappointment at this ironic approach to Portuguese history, particularly coming from the person who's dedicated the most subtle attention to that very subject throughout his extended career. In his defence, it has to be said that 2012 was a difficult year for the 104-year-old Oliveira, who had to spend long periods in hospital.

Either way, Kaurismäki and Oliveira work as prologue and epilogue respectively for what are doubtless the main pieces in *Historic Centre*. Pedro Costa returns to his fetish character Ventura, the protagonist of *Colossal Youth*, for 'Sweet Exorcist'. Ventura is now locked in a hospital elevator with a kind of street mime artist dressed up as a tin soldier (Antonio Santos), with whom he holds a long conversation revolving around memories of Portugal's Carnation Revolution in 1974, when the authoritarian Estado Novo regime was ousted after 42 years in power. The conversation is more like a monologue voiced by different people, almost always in voiceover, which gives shape to Ventura's nightmares regarding



Erice's 'Broken Windows'

1974 – when, as Costa has reminded us on various occasions, military men went out into the streets to "hunt blacks". Clearly, the Carnation Revolution does not constitute a happy memory for Cape Verdian immigrants, least of all for Ventura, who was hospitalised. Costa's style seems more radical here than ever; rarely have his images and what his characters tell us fused so powerfully. It seems that 'Sweet Exorcist' is actually a foretaste of a feature that Costa is currently working on, although it's difficult to anticipate its function within the project; an extract maybe, or just a sequence that has been or will be discarded?

'Broken Windows', Víctor Erice's contribution, is without doubt his most substantial work since *The Quince Tree Sun*; few films display so much generosity in 35 minutes. Its scope seems that of an ambitious feature: an investigation into the cultural and social roots of the Portuguese working class, exemplified by the workers in what was one of the biggest textile factories in Europe, the Vizela River Textile Mill, situated close to Guimarães and in operation from 1845 to 2002. Nowadays the factory is abandoned and nicknamed *vidros partidos* (broken windows). Once the economic hub of the region, it now stands as the most apt metaphor for the crisis devastating Portugal.

Erice conducted thorough research among the former workers of the factory and selected testimony that is recited to the camera by a series of characters – some played by former employees of the factory, others by

amateur or professional actors. This device calls to mind the work of directors such as Abbas Kiarostami, Eduardo Coutinho and Jia Zhangke, but its purpose is not just to offer another fiction-documentary meta-narrative. In little more than half an hour, it achieves a perfect synthesis that manages to embrace a century-and-a-half's worth of the history of the Portuguese working class.

The film's subtitle is 'Tests for a film in Portugal', and the artifice is uncovered when at given times we hear the instructions for the clapperboard. As if Erice were gathering testimonies for use in that other project, the characters recall to camera their experiences in the factory, their everyday lives, the colonial wars, emigration, the central position of women in social structures, unemployment... Throughout the research process, Erice had in mind a number of writers who, one way or another, are evoked in the film: Ernesto da Silva, author of *O capital* (1896), from which the "unemployed actor" Valdemar Santos reads an extract; his contemporary, the lucidly pessimistic Manuel Laranjeira, one of those suicidal writers with whom the history of Portuguese literature seems crammed, and whose relationship with the Spanish writer Miguel de Unamuno also caught Erice's attention; and Simone Weil, whose experience as a worker at Renault seemed relevant to the story of a factory in which female work was of paramount importance.

In the same way that Erice's *The Spirit of the Beehive* emerges from a frame in James Whale's *Frankenstein*, 'Broken Windows' originates from a black-and-white photograph hanging on one of the old factory's walls; it shows the entire workforce gathered in a large dining-room, looking towards the camera of an anonymous photographer. Their collective gaze is confronted by those of the contemporary characters, seeking identification. Almost a century has passed between those two representations; if there is something that unites them it's the profound sadness that reveals itself on the faces of a working class who at best – in the words of one of the people Erice interviews – only ever got to savour an occasional "discontented happiness". ☺

Translated by Mar Diestro-Dópido



De Oliveira's 'The Conquered Conqueror'



Kaurismäki's 'Tavern Man'

'I ADMIT I'M A BIT CREEPY...'



A bit like *Thomas the Tank Engine*? 'The Freestone Drone' ransacks the datastream to create an eerie collage of the visual cultures of militarised modernity

Video artist George Barber's *The Freestone Drone* offers a whimsical take on one of the new century's defining technologies

By Sukhdev Sandhu

"Altitude is the muse of enlightenment," the urban planner Thomas J. Campanella argued in *Cities from the Sky* (2001). "Elevation extends our vision, literally and figuratively. The complexity of life is reduced to utopian simplicity, a living diorama as benign as a child's train layout." Those claims have a bitterly ironic ring to them in 2013, as Barack Obama's greenlighting of the ever-more extensive use of drone planes against Middle Eastern insurgents has started to generate disquiet both internationally and at home.

The drone has become one of the defining technologies of this century: though it's also deployed by farmers, energy companies and weather searchers, it's more commonly seen as a symbol of neo-imperial biopower, America's dreams of scopic and military supremacy, Washington's endless and perhaps unwinnable War on Terror. In places like Gaza, drones are used as sonic weapons to demoralise street-bound Palestinians, but mostly they're surveillance machines that – at least as much as Google Earth or the vertical thrills on offer in computer games – are redefining aerial aesthetics.

Currently showing in London, *The Freestone Drone*, a video installation by British artist George Barber, offers what appears to be an oblique, almost whimsical take on the

subject. Its title a sing-song play on Jimi Hendrix's 'Stone Free', it personifies the drone, imbuing him with sentience ("He flew, thinking and reflecting on the work," recalls a female narrator), and portraying him as both querulous ("He answered back and argued") and meditative ("What happens when I die?" he asks his controller).

This may seem a strange direction for Barber, who first came to prominence in the mid-1980s as one of the leading lights in the Scratch Video movement, whose artists – including Kim Flitcroft and Jeffrey Hinton – pirated, chopped and screwed transmissions from mainstream broadcasting, creating frenetically plunderphonic visual pieces that moved to a very different beat to their source materials.

Or perhaps not. There's been much discussion, both within academic circles and the American armed forces, of 'militainment', the convergence between drones and videogaming; the US Air Force not only hires private contractors with a background in sports-network television or reality-TV programming to collate visual data collected by drones but is increasingly looking to recruit *Call of Duty* and *Halo* aficionados as drone operators.

The Freestone Drone, like such early works of Barber's as *Yes Frank No Smoke* (1986), ransacks the datastream for images – in this case footage of Al-Qaeda suspects, a missile tumbling

The drone symbolises US power and redefines aerial aesthetics – but here it takes on a querulous and meditative personality

through aerospace, suspicious-seeming individuals turning their backs to camera – to create an eerie collage of the visual cultures of militarised modernity. This is supplemented by the director's trademark drollery and low-key wit: "I'm a bit like Thomas the Tank Engine," claims the drone (voiced by Barber in speeded-up fashion). "He was a machine that could talk and he was small and hard-working." Elsewhere, he delivers groan-inducing one-liners: "Hi, I'm the Freestone Drone. I just happened to be in the neighbourhood and thought I'd drop by."

Some viewers may wish for a film that is more formally rigorous or more explicit in its political arguments, but it's precisely the tonal incongruities – the movement between twee ("Could I ever be a nice drone? I admit I give no warning. I'm a bit creepy"), the sensual and the tragic – that makes Barber's piece so distinctive. If anything, it takes up the challenge posed by artist Jordan Crandall in his suggestion that "the doomed drone performs a more vital function than the exultant one and dislodges conventional associations."

New conceptual associations – like playing on the meaning of drone (think 'thankless labour') – are overlaid with cinematic links to the French New Wave. The film draws on Georges Delerue's richly emotional music for Godard's *Le Mépris*, uses black-and-white stills evocative of Marker's *La Jetée* and borrows *Last Year in Marienbad*'s storyline of a woman repeatedly telling a man that they've never met before. By the end, the drone-as-human conceit has stopped being absurd and has begun to feel weirdly melancholic, saturated with sadness. **S**



'The Freestone Drone' is at Waterside Contemporary, London N1, until 23 March

SHOW AND TELL

Tales of sexuality and ritual selected by Catherine Millet stood out at Belfort, the festival created and directed by Janine Bazin

By Agnieszka Gratza

From its inception in 1986, Belfort Film Festival, according to the current director Catherine Bizern, strove to show how much the cinema of the future is linked to the history of cinema by programming auteur retrospectives and themed sections alongside an international competition showing only work by emerging filmmakers. Its founder was Janine Bazin, André Bazin's spouse and, together with André S. Labarthe, producer of the celebrated documentary TV series *Cinéastes de notre temps*, which commissioned young filmmakers – Rivette, Rohmer and Chabrol among them – to make films about the giants of French and international cinema.

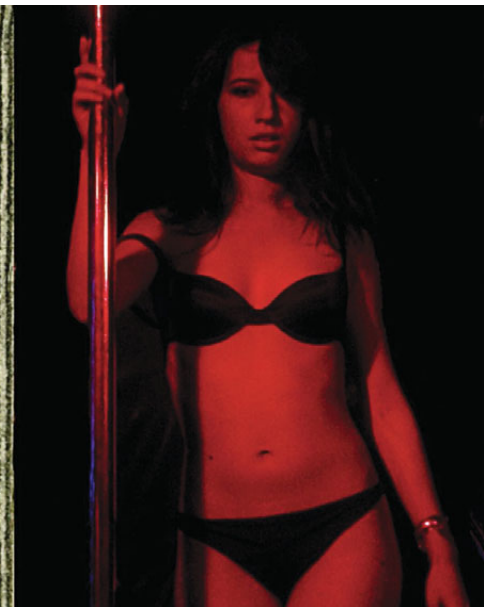
This year, retrospectives of auteurs as diverse as Ernst Lubitsch, Jean-Pierre Mocky and Rob Zombie ran parallel to strands about money and capitalism, reflecting the festival director's resolutely political vision of cinema. The notion that crises are the driving force of capitalism informed the selection of such titles as Labarthe's *No Comment* (2011), a response to Jean-Luc Godard's cinematic essay *Film socialisme* (2010) that portrays a family in the grip of a political crisis on a cruise liner: the children, who wish to experience socialism, are pitted against their parents, whom they challenge in mock elections.

Yet the most daring and original of the themed sections came from *art press* editor-in-chief Catherine Millet, who gained some notoriety in 2001 by publishing the unusually frank memoir *La Vie sexuelle de Catherine M.*, charting her sexual development from childhood masturbation to an adult fascination with group sex. Millet's fascination with sexuality and ritual goes hand in hand with a visual, and specifically painterly, sensibility, all of which came across in a selection designed to acknowledge the ties that bind cinema to the other arts, and above all to contemporary art. The 15 films chosen by *art press*, which celebrates its 40th anniversary this winter, ranged from classics by Pasolini and Greenaway to debut features such as Bruno Dumont's *La Vie de Jésus* (1996), Catherine Breillat's racy *Une vraie jeune fille* (1976) and Bertrand Bonello's rather morose *Quelque chose d'organique* (1997). Recent films by Isild Le Besco and Samira Makhmalbaf were also included. At odds with the erotically charged, if not downright pornographic films shown in this section were three short poetic essay films by Jean-Marie Straub and Danièle Huillet, including their final collaboration *Itinéraire de Jean Bricard* (2007) and *L'Inconsolable* (2011), the first film Straub made after Huillet's death in 2006.

Tales of sexual awakening told from a woman's perspective also featured prominently in the main competition; the number and visibility of women filmmakers at Belfort might owe something to its having a female



Get a grip: Virgil Vernier's 'Orléans' uses of Joan of Arc as the backdrop to an exploration of stripping



Women filmmakers' visibility at Belfort might owe something to its having a female director and gender-balanced jury

director who makes a point of working with a gender-balanced jury. Justine Triet's *Two Ships* (*Vilaine fille mauvais garçon*), whose happy-go-lucky leads are beset by family obligations and financial worries, took the Short Film Award and the Audience Award, while the French Film Award went to Shalimar Preuss's *Ma belle gosse*. Set on an island during the summer holidays, the film subtly portrays a tangle of family relations centred on 17-year-old Maden, who for years has been engaging in a secret correspondence with a nearby inmate twice her age.

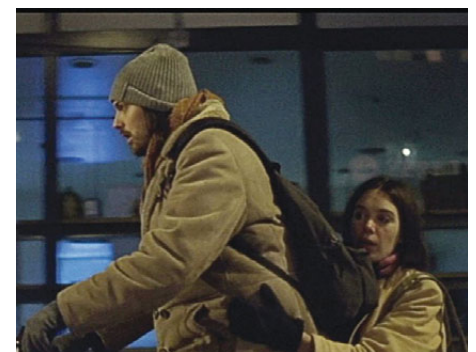
Belfort welcomes films that blur the boundaries between documentary and fiction (a growing trend at festivals). This is certainly the case with such artist-made films as Véréna Paravel and Lucien Castaing-Taylor's *Leviathan*, which won three prizes including the Grand Jury Award, or Virgil Vernier's hour-long *Orléans*, a documentary-fiction hybrid that delves into the lives of dancers in a

striptease club with the myth of Joan of Arc as a backdrop. Mixing cultural history and family memoir, the short *Aux bains de la reine*, made by artist Sergio Da Costa together with writer-director Maya Kosa, opts for a fragmented mode of narration in a journey through the Portuguese city of Caldas da Rainha, where the first thermal hospital was erected.

Two remarkable Asian debuts shown in competition, Chinese director Song Fang's *Memories Look at Me* and Thai filmmaker Wichanon Somumjarn's *In April the Following Year, There Was a Fire*, addressed the workings of memory. In the former, recollections surface largely in conversation, while in the latter they seamlessly blend in with the present. The same dichotomy between showing and telling was at work in two thematically interconnected films screened in the *art press* selection, Jean Eustache's *Une sale histoire* (1977) and Stephen Dwoskin's *Dirty* (1965). The story of a hole in women's toilets that stands for the camera lens, *Une sale histoire* comes in two versions, one documentary, one fictive, shot in 16mm and 35mm respectively, offering the same account almost word for word. Nothing is shown, everything is told, in contrast to Dwoskin's languorous but equally voyeuristic *Dirty*. These two short films were among the festival's highlights. 📺



'In April the Following Year, There Was a Fire'



'Two Ships'

PLAY IT AGAIN

Compulsively listening to songs with a special meaning is something most of us have done – and many filmmakers have used

By Frances Morgan

In *Musophilia*, Oliver Sacks's study of music and the mind, the neurologist writes about how familiar music acts as a "Proustian mnemonic, eliciting emotions and associations that had long been forgotten". He's referring specifically to how Alzheimer's sufferers can retain musical memories when their everyday recall has all but gone. But connections between music, memory, repetition and emotion are played out constantly in most of our lives, and often to great effect in cinema. You hear this not only in the leitmotifs that are a staple of traditional film composition but in soundtracks such as those to Scorsese's 1970s films and Paul Thomas Anderson's *Boogie Nights* (1997), where pop songs are dropped in with smooth precision to instantly evoke a time and a place. The same kinds of songs can be deployed with the postmodern, mordant incongruity of Tarantino or transformed forever in David Lynch's haunted echo chamber.

When we think of a film's character, rather than its director, being obsessed with a piece of music, it's often with murderous intent, as when Christian Bale hacks up a colleague to Huey Lewis and the News's 'Hip to be Square' in *American Psycho* (2000). But actually the urge to press repeat over and over again on a song is unlikely to be the sign of a psychopath; in fact, you would be hard pressed to find someone who has never done it. In fiction, these self-induced earworms can illuminate a fragment of a character's past, telling you not only what they remember but why and how. The title of Koreeda Hirokazu's *Still Walking* (2008) comes from a line in 'Blue Light Yokohama', a hit for Japanese actress and singer Ayumi Ishida in 1968; the song is a favourite of Toshiko, the elderly mother of the film's lead character Ryota, who has returned home for a strained family visit with his new wife Yukari. When Yukari asks innocently over dinner if Toshiko and her domineering husband Kyohei have a "special song", he denies any such thing, while Toshiko is instantly able to locate an old 45, which she asks her son to put on a well-maintained record player. The song fills the family's dining room, its bossanova-tinged shuffle and distant horns framing lyrics about lovers walking through the city, through the night; Toshiko sings along vaguely, playing the sentimental old woman, but her reverie has an undercurrent of tension. In the next scene she reveals to Kyohei that she heard him singing 'Blue Light Yokohama' when she discovered his affair with another woman, 40 years previously. The song, then, is not a reminder of a happy past but the means of keeping a wound fresh and painful. Its repetition is a slow revenge.

Later that night, Ryota and Yukari talk about the incident. Ryota is creeped out. "You know she plays it when she's alone," he says. His



I'd be safe and warm: 'California Dreamin'' takes on talismanic properties in 'Chungking Express'

wife doesn't see anything out of the ordinary. "Everyone has a song they listen to on the sly," she remarks – and no, she won't reveal hers. In Koreeda's typically understated fashion, this scene touches on something much deeper about the different ways men and women are thought to respond to pop music. Ryota finds it "scary" the way his mother and wife use music as part of a private invocation, mapping songs onto an object of desire in an obscure, almost occult way. That object doesn't even have to be a person: think of the way Faye Wong's character obsessive replays 'California Dreamin'' in *Chungking Express* (1994). Her yearning is not only for the downhearted cop played by Tony Leung but for escape from her snack-bar job and from Hong Kong. The same bittersweet song is also the unlikely choice for the street-dance routine young heroine Mia practises throughout *Fish Tank* (2009) – here too it points to a desire for escape. Musically it works well as an obsessive fragment because its structure feels unresolved: melodically, the chorus is just a repetition of the verse, and a conclusion is always just out of reach.

The idea that a song and its attached memories can provide short-term release with

Music can serve as a private invocation, mapping songs onto an object of desire in an obscure, almost occult way

diminishing returns is spelled out most clearly in *Young Adult* (2011), whose 1990s soundtrack no doubt helped draw audiences to it, only to make this not so young adult wince. Charlize Theron's thirtysomething anti-heroine Mavis sets off to track down her teenage boyfriend Buddy with one of his old mixtapes to hand; luckily her hire car has a tape deck so this odyssey begins with the stodgy, sweet riffs of 'The Concept' by Scottish indie band Teenage Fanclub, originally released in 1991. The medium is a big part of the message: there are close-ups of the pink and yellow Memorex and the machine that plays it, and the sound is suitably fuzzy and time-warped. It's an optimistic beginning that darkens as the song, with its refrain of "I didn't want to hurt you", plays again and again; soon, the clunk-click of the tape resembles a tic, a compulsion akin to the hair-pulling Mavis occasionally indulges



Listening on the sly: 'Still Walking'



Dance break: 'Fish Tank'



Can't get you out of my head: 'Morvern Callar'

in. Cruelly, Buddy's wife and her female friends show how the past can be celebrated not obsessively but vibrantly, as they perform a rollicking version of 'The Concept' at a local bar.

Young Adult uses music to give us access to Mavis's memories while commenting sharply on her nostalgia and narcissism, showing how music can be 'used' like a narcotic. It is unfortunate that female listening is presented as a kind of pathology, with music as something we mainline as we cling to impossible dreams, crushes or times past. Yet there are correctives, in the form of heroines like Samantha Morton's Morvern Callar in Lynne Ramsay's 2001 film of that name, for whom music is both emotional and intellectual sustenance. The connections she draws between music, place and feeling, the "Proustian mnemonics" that Sacks talks about, are gnomic, expert and uncompromising, from Aphex Twin to Nancy Sinatra and Lee Hazlewood. Like the characters in *Chungking Express* and *Fish Tank*, she also favours The Mamas & the Papas, drifting through an Ibiza rave with 'This Is Dedicated to the One I Love' on her omnipresent Walkman and unforgettably inscribing the film's soundtrack with the music that plays for her alone. 📻



Pink and yellow blues: 'Young Adult'

PRIMAL SCREEN THE WORLD OF SILENT CINEMA



Shot in the locations described by Victor Hugo, an epic 1925 *Les Misérables* returns to challenge the musical

By Kevin Brownlow

The starkly polarised critical response to the new musical version of 'Les Misérables' is quite unlike the reaction that greeted the 1925 version by Henri Fescourt, which I first encountered in 1955. I was an office boy in the film industry when I noticed an alluring cellar in Wardour Street; walking down a flight of steps, I found myself surrounded by film, most of it 35mm and of little interest to the 9.5mm collector that I had become. But one day a pile of round blue boxes appeared: a 9.5mm release marked 'S/690 Les Misérables'. I might have bought it, but on my salary of £4.10s a week it was impossible, and anyway I feared it would be a bore.

Nevertheless, I read about it in the trade papers at the BFI. It was unusual in that it had been made in the exact locations Victor Hugo had described in his novel. Alas, the film had been backed by Westi, the German concern that initially financed 'Napoléon' (1927), and the company's collapse forced the filmmakers to retreat into the studio.

9.5mm films, made mostly for home viewing, were always abridged, but at nine reels this was the longest silent you could buy. At that length, I was convinced it would be complete, but was shocked to discover that the original French version consisted of four films lasting more than seven hours! The Americans made short work of that; they cut it from 32 reels to eight, running at just over 100 minutes.

In England, it was released in two parts: 'The Soul of Humanity' (11,000 feet or 147 minutes), which premiered on 15 November 1926, and 'The Barricades' (10,000 feet or 133 minutes), which came out a week later. The premiere was at the London Hippodrome – just down the road from the Palace Theatre, where the musical-theatre adaptation of the story would play for so long later in the century. The English version had been brought from France to fill the gap caused by the ban on the 1925 'Phantom of the Opera' due to unauthorised use of troops for advertising purposes! Universal reduced it to four hours, but you still had to sit through the stage prologue without which no important film was thought to be complete. Character after character broke through a printed page framed in a large-sized edition of the novel, creeping past the sleeping figure of Victor Hugo...

Eventually I did acquire the print, not for myself but for a collector friend in Wales. A few years later, he left me his collection in his will and when I watched it again, I realised the film was so authentic it might have been shot in the 1800s. The towns in which it was filmed had scarcely changed, and Fescourt and his camera team caught both their

Henri Fescourt's film is so authentic it might have been shot in the 1800s



Bleak and beautiful: the 1925 'Les Misérables'

beauty and their bleak atmosphere. Though the keynote of the treatment is simplicity, there are surprises: rapid cutting, subjective camera, even animation. And Fescourt was clearly passionate about the novel: he fought the producers who wanted to commit the customary atrocities on the story and insisted on a film of four parts. The players, led by then unknown stage actor Gabriel Gabrio (Jean Valjean) and ex-ballerina Sandra Milowanoff (doubly poignant as Fantine and Cosette), were impeccable.

While I was working on my book about Gance's 'Napoléon', I went to see actor Harry Krimer. He lived near Montreuil-sur-Mer, where so much of the story was set and where Hugo had often gone on holiday. He took me on a tour of the town. It was virtually unchanged; many of the buildings were falling to pieces but its ramparts had survived.

In 1984, I saw half the film at the Cinémathèque Française. It made me realise that the 9.5mm version, impressive as it was, was little more than a trailer. Three years later, the entire film was shown at the NFT in John Gillett and Richard Abel's magnificent French silent season. To my amazement, the house was packed and hardly anyone left. The picture, accompanied superbly by pianists Neil Brand and Richard McLaughlin, received prolonged applause. The 'Sunday Express' reflected the press reaction in 1926, describing the film in near-Biblical terms: "Its panorama is tremendous... reaching out into all aspects of human existence... until the spectator begins to feel he is watching the march of humanity itself."

Since the only disappointment was some poor laboratory work, making several scenes far too dark, it was frustrating to hear that the original camera negative had been sitting, unrestored for decades, in the vaults of Les Archives Françaises du Film du CNC. But now, historian of French silent film Lenny Borger reports from Paris, a complete restoration is underway, based on these negatives, Fescourt's original script and an incomplete tinted and toned diacetate print. The world premiere will be held at the Cinémathèque de Toulouse in 2014. In the meantime, one can thrill to Raymond Bernard's spectacular 1934 five-hour sound version, recently restored by Pathé, and showing at La Filmothèque du Quartier Latin in Paris. 📻

CREDIT WHERE CREDIT'S DUE

From Jean Renoir to Monte Hellman, plenty of directors have seen their own distinctive work appear in films credited to others



By Brad Stevens

Near the beginning of *Shatter* (aka *Call Him Mr Shatter*, 1974), which is credited to Michael Carreras, the eponymous protagonist

(Stuart Whitman) enters a hotel room in which the president of an East African state is embracing a young woman. Shatter is holding a camera, apparently to take blackmail photos; but it is actually a cunningly disguised gun, which he uses to assassinate the politician. Thirty-six years later, towards the end of Monte Hellman's *Road to Nowhere* (2010), filmmaker Mitchell Haven (Tygh Runyan) finds himself in a hotel room with a pair of corpses. As the police arrive outside, Haven begins filming their activities through a window: unable to see what Haven is pointing at them, a cop orders him to "drop the weapon". The concern these two films share with the idea of a camera as a weapon is hardly coincidental, since the *Shatter* scene was in fact directed by Hellman, whom Carreras replaced half-way through the production and whose name does not appear on release prints.

The original auteurs prided themselves on their democratic tendencies, claiming that the tastes of mass audiences were generally superior to those of 'professional' critics, who preferred Zinnemann, Stevens and Wyler to Hawks, Hitchcock and Boetticher. But in its insistence on looking for 'clues' to the interpretation of one film in other films by the same director, auteurism is also a form of connoisseurship. With films that involve uncredited co-directors, this version of *la politique des auteurs* makes some of its loftiest claims, asserting the ability to crack a code within a code.

When great directors contribute anonymously to the work of hacks, or vice versa, the situation is relatively straightforward: nobody will have trouble picking out the scenes Erich von Stroheim shot for *Merry-Go-Round* (1922) before Rupert Julian took over, and those parts of Orson Welles's *Touch of Evil* (1958) added by Harry Keller stick out like sore thumbs. Cases in which the credited and uncredited directors are both illustrious can be more problematic, but also more fascinating.

The opening section of *Spartacus* (1960), directed by Anthony Mann before he was fired, is stylistically quite distinct from, but neither inferior nor superior to, Stanley Kubrick's footage. Or take *Macao* (1952), which, despite being credited solely to Josef von Sternberg, was substantially reshot by Nicholas Ray, who ended up being responsible for approximately one third of the final version. It's difficult to think of two filmmakers whose approaches were more irreconcilable. Von Sternberg privileged image over performance and was interested in his actors solely to the extent that he could



Now shooting: Monte Hellman filmed material for 'Shatter', which was credited to Michael Carreras

interrogate their publicly mediated identities. Ray privileged performance over image and related to his actors as human beings, teasing out the 'genuine' person concealed behind the 'fake' persona: the Humphrey Bogart of *In a Lonely Place* (1950), the James Cagney of *Run for Cover* (1954), the Richard Burton of *Bitter Victory* (1957) and the Charlton Heston of *55 Days at Peking* (1963). Of course, in reshooting *Macao*, Ray would not have been consciously attempting to impose his own personality; on the contrary, he was clearly trying to imitate von Sternberg's approach. Much of the film's peculiar charm is due to Ray's inadequacies as a cold-blooded professional, his humanist affection for Robert Mitchum and Jane Russell constantly distracting him from the job at hand. This is especially evident in the sampan scene, which contains some wonderfully spontaneous gestures (notice Russell's amusement as Mitchum offers her his right hand when she has obviously been expecting his left), a sense of vulnerability (Mitchum's confession that he has "been lonely in Times Square on New Year's Eve") and an emphasis on unironic intimacy that, for better or worse, are incompatible with von Sternberg's worldview.

Uncredited work is generally given a strictly subordinate role in discussions of a particular director, but this might not be fair. Raymond Durgnat's 1974 book *Jean Renoir* contains chapters on each of Renoir's shorts and features, but only refers in passing to the director having "discussed the possibility of a film starring



Monte Hellman's 'Road to Nowhere'

Auteurism locates some of its loftiest claims in the ability to identify the hand of one director in work credited to another

Deanna Durbin". In his autobiography, Renoir doesn't mention this project at all. But the Durbin film was actually made. Shot in 1942 as *Forever Yours*, it was released in 1943 as *The Amazing Mrs. Holliday*, attributed to producer Bruce Manning (his only directorial credit), who had amicably taken over from Renoir. In a letter to William K. Everson, published in the August 1987 issue of *Films in Review*, Durbin insisted that "Jean Renoir shot two thirds of the film as it now stands." *Mrs. Holliday* is, at least for its first hour, far more Renoirian than his previous film *Swamp Water* (1941), parts of which were directed by Irving Pichel. As in *La Règle du jeu* (1939), the problem of obeying or even comprehending rules – initially those of America's immigration authorities, later those of San Francisco's high society – is a key theme, beautifully illustrated by Durbin's character's difficulty negotiating the spaces of a luxurious house, her naturalness clashing with the artificially imposed requirements that she wear high heels (in which she can barely walk) or use a particular spoon (with which she cannot eat). There's something Boudou-like about Durbin's character, particularly in two dinner-table scenes during which she shocks the butler by picking up food with her hand and walks from one end of the table to the other to facilitate conversation. Despite its bland final section, *The Amazing Mrs. Holliday* strikes me as one of the finest and most characteristic examples of (to use Durgnat's term) Renoir *Américain*.

The Writers Guild of America successfully campaigned to have blacklisted writers' names added to the credits of several films. Perhaps it's time the Directors Guild suggested that unacknowledged directors be treated similarly, enabling the recognition of some unjustly neglected gems. 📽

UNTAMED

A mix of fable, documentary, romance, thrill ride and animal-rights activism, *Zoo in Budapest* is a unicorn movie, rare and odd

By Dan Callahan

As a child of eight, leafing through Jack Lodge's book *Hollywood 1930s*, I was captivated by a still of Loretta Young putting on her stockings in a film entitled *Zoo in Budapest* (1933). She was stretching one of her shapely legs across two pages of the book, and this generous still did a lot to suggest the soft-focus majesty of Lee Garmes's cinematography. A few years later, the Cinemax cable channel played *Zoo in Budapest* late at night and I videotaped it. I've watched it many times since, with gathering and increasing pleasure, for this is a singular and unclassifiable hybrid film, a mix of fable, documentary, romance, thrill ride and out-and-out animal-rights activism. It's like a unicorn movie, rare and rarified, and pledged to its own peculiar rhythms and potent, inchoate emotions.

Rowland V. Lee, the director of *Zoo in Budapest*, made films throughout the 1920s, notably an early version of *Alice Adams* (1923) starring Florence Vidor and several vehicles for the heavy-breathing Pola Negri. Many of his silent movies are either lost or inaccessible, but the sensitive *Doomsday* (1928), which stars Vidor and Gary Cooper, suggests that he had a talent for moody romanticism. Lee had worked with Young two years earlier on *The Ruling Voice*, a crime drama with Walter Huston; in that film, she is just a journeyman player whereas in *Zoo in Budapest* Young is framed like a delicate fawn in the midst of the film's orchidaceous visual lustre. Her face in this movie is pure fairytale maiden but, when she opens her mouth to speak, her voice sounds surprisingly tough, a contrast that is at the heart of the film's conflict between loving animals and fearing them, between scorning mass society and wanting to belong to it.

After the credits end, Garmes's highly mobile camera dollies in and around many of the cages in the zoo where the animals are kept and gives them extreme close-ups to capture their particular characters. Our hero is Zani (Gene Raymond), a friend to all animals who swings around the zoo and snatches furs off callous rich women whenever their backs are turned. Our villain is Heinie (Paul Fix), a malcontent who throws a cigarette at a tiger and looks and dresses so much like our hero that he functions as a disturbingly sleazy Zani doppelgänger. The officious Garbush (Murray Kinnell) wants Zani tried and prosecuted for theft. "People shouldn't kill animals and wear their fur," Zani insists to the kindly but somewhat absentminded head of the zoo, Dr Grunbaum (O.P. Heggie), who replies: "Unfortunately, there is no law against it." Expressing an attitude that seems to be the film's own, Zani is outright anti-social when he cries: "I hate the world outside and its people and everything about it."

Mean, dimwitted Miss Murst (Lucille Ward)



A delicate fawn in orchidaceous lustre: Loretta Young in 'Zoo in Budapest'

Director Rowland V. Lee and cinematographer Lee Garmes take us from bright bustle to perilously enclosed rebellion

WHAT THE PAPERS SAID

"Except for a short final scene, all of this marvellously poetic work takes place in an Arthur Rackhamesque Tiergarten which serves as a refuge for the three main characters... the spectacular finale, [which involves] the escape of all the beasts, [is] an extravagant battle-ballet of maddened elephants, bristling porcupines and flying tigers. The passages leading up to this fantastic action sequence are remarkable for their balance of narrative vigour and romantic lyricism. Lee Garmes' camera links sinuous art nouveau tracking shots which establish the physical layout of the menageries and introduce characters (reminiscences here of his previous work with Sternberg) and slow, caressing movements during the glowing idyllic passages. An exquisite

scene is set in the marsh at dusk... 'Zoo in Budapest' is a very special classic – yet one is hard put to find consideration of this really unique movie in histories of the cinema."

Elliott Stein,
'Sight & Sound,'
Autumn 1970



has sold the orphan Eve (Young) into indentured servitude for five years. After Eve runs away and hides with Zani in the zoo with a runaway boy (Wally Albright), *Zoo in Budapest* slowly dims the lights on its bright, bustling first third and starts to become one of the most seductive let's-get-away-from-it-all movies, capturing the mood of perilously enclosed rebellion that makes the empty-mansion scenes between the teenagers in Nicholas Ray's *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) so suggestive and so touching.

"Thinking? That's bad," Zani tells Eve. "Feeling's all right but don't ever think!" This is an ominous philosophy, of course, but easy to swallow in a film so romantic that it shows a monkey curing its mate of illness with mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. When Zani carries Eve across a lake covered in mist, it makes for a movingly gallant image of pure-hearted protectiveness, but at the end of *Zoo*, as at the end of *Rebel*, a move towards conformity proves the melancholy aftermath of a pitifully brief utopia.

Zoo in Budapest is not the movie of one person alone. Lee shares a screenplay credit with several other writers, while Garmes took credit for the film's most enchanting imagery in an interview for Charles Higham's book *Hollywood Cameramen*. Lee, Garmes and Raymond re-teamed that same year for *I Am Suzanne!*, an awkward movie set in the world of puppeteering which went too far with the whimsy that was only an undertone in *Zoo*. After that misstep, Lee made a series of costume films like *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1934) and *The Toast of New York* (1937), plus the horror sequel *Son of Frankenstein* (1939), before retiring in 1945. *Zoo in Budapest* is his unaccountable little miracle picture, a shimmering oasis in 1930s cinema and a movie unlike any other you are ever likely to see. 🍷

FOR AND AGAINST

CARLOS REYGADAS

The Mexican director of *Japón*, *Silent Light* and *Post Tenebras Lux* has attracted almost as much critical ire as approbation over the years. So is he a master of experimental cinema or a self-indulgent provocateur with a condescending attitude to anyone outside his social class? Two critics cast an eye over his career



Prize fighter: Reygadas won best director at Cannes for 'Post Tenebras Lux', the Jury Prize for 'Silent Light' and a *Caméra d'Or* special mention for 'Japón'

JONATHAN ROMNEY

Carlos Reygadas is an experimental filmmaker – perhaps not in the accepted sense, given that he generally tends to work with more or less coherent narrative shapes. But his films are deeply experimental in that they're about unknown outcomes, about the thrill of throwing the dice; they seem to be searching for their own form as they play out on screen. This commitment to potential over completeness – to a finished film nevertheless being a work in progress – is characteristic of very few filmmakers, even in the world of what we generally call art cinema (among the list, I'd count Miguel Gomes, Apichatpong Weerasethakul and, in his last two films, Paul Thomas Anderson).

Reygadas's latest work *Post Tenebras Lux* is a film in search of its own meaning(s), although on a second viewing it seems more traditionally transparent than at first. There's a tangible narrative thread: a middle-class Mexican family living in the countryside, their existence troubled by the father's volatile anger and his porn addiction. Then everything is changed by a sudden criminal

act by a local worker, which leads to a surreally brutal payoff (one of those shock images for which Reygadas has become famous, and arguably his most bizarre and audacious).

But then there are elements that don't obviously fit the framework: a rugby match at the English boys' school Reygadas himself attended; a visit to a swingers' sauna; and visitations from a glowing CGI devil. Add leaps forward in time to what seem alternative or parallel futures. In its concise way, *Post Tenebras Lux* is a miniature "garden of forking paths", to use Borges's phrase – not a family story so much as a set of possibilities for telling a family story. You might see *Post Tenebras Lux* as notes for a possible film that Reygadas didn't make; the filmmakers named above are, I'd argue, more in the business of sketching potential films than of making actual finished ones, which somehow seems a less exciting proposition.

It's this fragmentary aspect that I find so

Reygadas's films have a drive to step outside the expected visual world and pre-programmed forms of a narrative

exciting about Reygadas, even in his relatively 'closed' work. It's evident in *This Is My Kingdom*, his 12-minute contribution to 2010 portmanteau *Revolución* – a quasi-documentary staging of an open-air fiesta attended by representatives from across Mexican society, from high-society matrons to impoverished alcoholic burn-outs. It's a compacted seed of a film that ends up exploding anarchically – and could have made an explosive feature, had Reygadas chosen to expand it. But the constant with Reygadas is the suggestion of something that doesn't need to be stated at length.

Hence the disturbing semi-erasure of the backstory in *Battle in Heaven* (2005); what concerns Reygadas is not so much that a couple have kidnapped a baby, who subsequently dies, but how this fact affects their lives. Nor do we need to know why the protagonist of *Japón* (2001) is suicidal, nor the narrative justification for the closing apocalyptic vision; all these things are given elements, narrative 'readymades' grafted into the text and engendering the images.

Reygadas's films are thrilling for their sense of rapture, of almost physical excitement at the possibilities of images and their combination. From the harshly shot, intensely

textured landscape studies in *Japón*, to *Silent Light* (2007), where the natural world and its registers of light seem constantly to tend towards the abstract and metaphysical, to the exalted camera moves of *Battle in Heaven* and its unexpected, often convulsively abrupt images (such as a devil-masked figure glimpsed on a subway train) – in all of these, there's an intense hunger for revelations, a drive to step outside the expected visual world and pre-programmed forms of a narrative.

One of the seemingly incongruous sequences in *Post Tenebras Lux* involves spouses Natalia and Juan venturing nervously into a swingers' sauna apparently catering to bourgeois intellectuals (there are 'Duchamp' and 'Hegel' rooms). Amid the damp-dripping bodies of various sizes, Juan looks on while Natalia is fucked by an anonymous man while being gently cradled by a fleshy older woman. It generally suits us to assume that scenes involving middle-age, middle-class sexual profligacy are satiric, or to be read as grotesque or frightening (Gaspar Noé's nightspots are invariably hell on earth). But what if Reygadas's sauna were actually heaven, and Natalia discovered a transcendent rapture in the other woman's arms?

Whatever sexual adventures Reygadas may or may not be advertising in this manifestly tender scene, he's certainly proposing an attitude to cinema – a provocation to step out of your aesthetic safety zone into clouds of uncertainty, to venture among people whose values (artistic or sexual) you may not share. Most of us might balk at visiting the Duchamp room – but then, most filmgoers today would run a mile before risking a film such as *Post Tenebras Lux*, or even the relatively safe *Silent Light*. With Reygadas, you don't know what you're going to find in the steam, in the dark or even in those daylight landscapes at which this anti-conventional ruralist is increasingly proving a master. Whether he's being confrontational – or quietly, enigmatically indirect, as in *Post Tenebras Lux* – Reygadas, as much as any contemporary filmmaker, is committed to the dare, and to inciting his audience to dare too. **S**

QUINTIN

After seeing *Battle in Heaven* for the first time, I happened to comment that, even more than building a successful film career, its director Carlos Reygadas aspired to commit rape on cinema. It may have been an exaggerated claim but, apart from the obvious talent and ambition that ensured Reygadas became the first Latin American filmmaker since Glauber Rocha to really make an impact internationally, it does nevertheless point to a genuine violence in the Mexican director's relationship to the medium.

Reygadas was born in 1971 and started making films late, after stints as a lawyer and a diplomat. But from his first feature *Japón* through to *Post Tenebras Lux*, his career has been one of constant, spectacular ascendance. Few filmmakers start out hailed as a genius and then manage to retain that status. The notion of 'genius' is less an assessment of the

His films fit snugly into those Cannes line-ups where chic sordidness and high-minded gruesomeness are the norm

work, more the way that work is conceived: the mode in which Reygadas's films operate is that of 'masterpiece' – that is to say, the profound and utterly personal film, which provokes rejection or admiration but never indifference, and which sets about establishing a dialogue with other high-ranking geniuses of cinema. The kind of masterpiece in which Reygadas traffics inevitably comes with its share of scandal, of overt challenge to ordinary tastes and political correctness, but compensates by its search for virtuosity.

The auteurist stature that Reygadas cultivates in his films is achieved more by stridency and determination than by stylistic continuity or thematic preoccupation. Yet in his cinema we can glimpse a certain mysticism – the idea that the world is ruled by colossal, secret forces with which the artist can engage directly. Hence, since his view of the world connects him with the Almighty, even the lowest or most banal of his imaginings bears the dignity of its creator. A genius in touch with the Almighty has the right to omnipotence: he can indulge any whim, as well as any violence. Let's take, for instance, a scene in *Battle in Heaven*, in which the character masturbates while watching a football match. This is cheap allegory; in its scorn for the working classes, it is one of the most unpleasant and stupid scenes in recent cinema.

But Reygadas does sometimes get it absolutely right. His career divides into two halves. The first starts with *Japón*, a film of originality, ambition, risk and freshness, unusual for Latin American cinema of the time. This was followed by *Battle in Heaven*, an aesthetic and political failure – the result of trying to capture his country in a series of doubtful allegories, with sex at their core. Rejected by Cannes in 2004, *Battle in Heaven* was remade in order to be accepted in competition there the following year; in other words in the very place where the careers and fates of profoundly ambitious (and, preferably, bombastic and flamboyant) filmmakers are decided. And Reygadas is, above all else, a man of Cannes, one of those specially chosen by artistic director Thierry



Head to head: 'Battle in Heaven'

Frémaux to make a noise and keep the profile of the competition high. Reygadas's films fit snugly into those annual Cannes competition line-ups where chic sordidness and high-minded gruesomeness are the norm.

The second part of Reygadas's career is inaugurated in 2007 by *Silent Light*, an intimate drama set among Mexican Mennonites who speak a German dialect. This is Reygadas's most accomplished film, one born of his admiration for Tarkovsky, albeit ultimately more akin to Dreyer (complete with resurrection à la *Ordet*); it's as if someone decided to paint a Picasso and somehow managed to pull it off. *Silent Light* is an impeccable film, capturing Mexican social reality – the realm in which Reygadas tends to overstate – from a prudent distance. Here Reygadas proved he could make an original film, albeit more sober and limited in its inventive scope. One of the keys to this was the replacement of the Argentine cinematographer Diego Martínez Vignatti – too emphatic and publicity driven – with the Mexican Alexis Zabé, who is capable of tremendous subtlety, of takes that breathe like few others in contemporary cinema. But the credit is not just Zabé's; Reygadas managed to locate a photographic sensibility here that's close to his Tarkovskian influence, and also incorporates shades of Aleksandr Sokurov and Béla Tarr.

By now more assured in his style and aesthetic, in *Post Tenebras Lux* Reygadas frees himself from linear narrative and a clear set of parameters in order to return to the slightly chaotic freedom of his earlier films. This film's most interesting aspect is the arbitrary way it looks at the world. Both garlanded and booed at Cannes, the film was accompanied by unfortunate press releases in which Reygadas even tried to justify animal cruelty. Focused on a married couple from his own social milieu, filmed in his own house and featuring his own children as actors, it gathers together a series of intriguing mental trips that ramble far and wide – taking in Tolstoy and de Sade, the English school where Reygadas studied (and played rugby), nature, fauna, architecture and also – unfortunately – those Mexicans who live outside the bourgeois milieu. It's in his depiction of these people that Reygadas, perhaps without being aware of it, becomes ridiculous and condescending. **S**

i Translated by Mar Diestro-Dópidio. 'Post Tenebras Lux' is released in the UK on 22 March, and is reviewed on page 101



Artist of the floating world: 'Silent Light'

READERS' LETTERS

Letters are welcome, and should be addressed to the Editor at Sight & Sound, BFI, 21 Stephen Street, London W1T 1LN Fax: 020 7436 2327 Email: S&S@bfi.org.uk

A NOTE OF DISCORD

I must query a sentence in Mark Cousins's piece 'The Inexpressible' (S&S, March). It begins: "Pasolini's movies are as disinterested in smooth storytelling..." – so far OK, except that it should be 'uninterested' not 'disinterested' (which means 'impartial'). But it continues: "...as Morrissey is in conventional harmonics". What is this supposed to mean? Harmonics are the overtones that colour a fundamental pitch: they are governed by the physical laws of acoustics and cannot therefore be described as either 'conventional' or 'unconventional'.

Perhaps Cousins intended to say Morrissey's work features unconventional harmonies. Well, no: possibly it's less unsophisticated harmonically than most pop, but it still operates well within harmonic conventions. I can think of very few rock musicians who (for better or worse) experimented with unusual harmonies: Zappa, Soft Machine, Henry Cow, a handful of mostly forgotten 1970s Continental bands and Grateful Dead. I'm not aware of any songs in which Morrissey approached anything remotely comparable. **Bob Quail**, by email

TRIUMPHALISM OR TRIUMPH?

Having watched *Zero Dark Thirty* a few days ago, I feel compelled to add my own thoughts to the excellent debate sparked off in your February issue. I fail to see how this chilling film can be read as triumphalist. If anything, Bigelow and her team suggest that fundamentalism exists on both sides of the political/ideological divide and that its adherents (or should that be 'victims?') are mere products of the systems which strip them of their personalities and enslave them to a so-called higher cause.

In the first segment of the film, the male CIA operative informs his prisoner that sooner or later, the torture will cause his will to break. "It's just biology," he says. Bigelow immediately cuts to a shot of Jessica Chastain's Maya. The message seems clear: just as the prisoners will succumb to their interrogators, so too will Maya become subjugated to the narratives and beliefs which have shaped her life since she left school. The film's final shot supports this bleak, decidedly non-jingoistic standpoint. Alone, unsung and directionless, Maya weeps against a backdrop that suggests both a prison cell and the American flag, ripped to shreds. Hardly a triumphalist image.

Dariusz Alavi, by email

FLYING HIGH

Hoorah for Robert Murphy! Reviewing the book *Ealing Revisited* (S&S, January), Philip Kemp refers to Murphy's contribution, in which he controversially ranks the late work *The Man in the Sky* among Ealing's finest. I believe Murphy is right.

The film concerns a test pilot safely bringing down a plane in a life-and-death situation but

LETTER OF THE MONTH LIGHT AND DARK

I was dismayed at the apparently blinkered thinking of Guy Westwell's 'Zero Dark Thirty' review (S&S, February), particularly when he declared: "This is a film about which we should be deeply suspicious."

Who's "we"?

Westwell seems to see Kathryn Bigelow's movie as one long, concerted bid to justify post-9/11 US torture of terrorist suspects. But it seems to me the torture debate is only part of a very complex, very morally robust and very accomplished picture that does so much more than simply try to justify "any means necessary".

Yes, it opens with a 9/11 World Trade Center phonecall, but this is surely economic movie scene-setting rather than the setting of an agenda. And the inclusion of the 7/7 attacks did not, for me, suggest the London bombings were part of some "grand bin Laden scheme"; rather, it upped the ante for the CIA investigators (in the movie) who had to continually convince their superiors that the search for bin Laden was as important, if not more important, than any surveillance or infiltration of smaller terrorist groups, wherever they were active in the world.

To suggest the film's "central thrust" is simply an attempt to legitimise torture is taking it too far; I believe that Westwell is also mistaken when he says one investigator's wavering, 60 per cent certainty of bin Laden's whereabouts was pitched so low



due to the fact that he knew the information concerned was gained by torture. Again, it's a much more complex situation than that.

I was reminded of 'The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp', in which our hero is told: "If you let yourself be defeated by them just because you are too fair to hit back the same way they hit at you, there won't be any methods but Nazi methods!"

We in good ol' Blighty (and at the good ol' BFI?) should perhaps not be so quick to question American tactics, whether in the interrogation room or the editing booth, given our own lessons from history. 'Zero Dark Thirty' returns to the same 'Blimp' debate, putting it in the context of today's global conflicts, both seen and unseen, and offers a gripping, thought-provoking, technically awe-inspiring piece of cinema that is surely to be celebrated rather than held suspiciously at arm's length. **Callum Reid**, by email

concealing this from his wife. The hero may display a stiff upper lip, but the film reveals what is hidden beneath since the pilot's behaviour derives from a sense of failure at his inability to support his wife and children as they deserve. All the repressed emotion bursts forth at the close in a confrontation between the couple, magnificently played by Jack Hawkins and Elizabeth Sellars.

This is an insightful portrayal of life in Britain in the mid-1950s and true to aspects of the British character. Geoff Andrew described *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* as probably the greatest study of 'Englishness' in the cinema. I don't disagree, but I suggest that in its own way *The Man in the Sky* is the runner-up. It's an intriguing irony that it was devised by an American, but one who had already proved in *Genevieve* and *The Ladykillers* how wonderfully attuned he was to things British: William Rose. **Mansel Stimpson**, London

LOST CLASSICS

I was delighted and fascinated by Sam Dunn's article 'The Ones that Got Away' (S&S, March). It is indeed frustrating that so much British material has slipped unsung into the past, but encouraging to hear that they may be available again. I wrote a similar but less scholarly piece for a film-studies course some time ago. I had

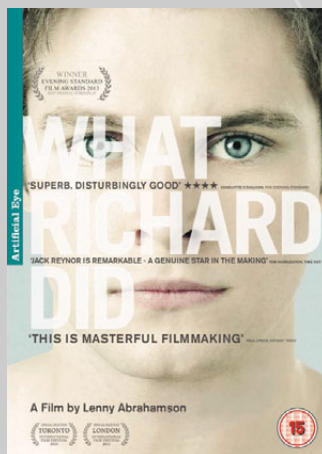
to read almost to the end of Dunn's article before I came across a movie I had listed: *I Was Happy Here*. To this, may I add *Bitter Harvest* (Peter Graham Scott, 1963) *Unman, Wittering and Zigo* (John Mackenzie, 1971) and especially *West Eleven* (Michael Winner, 1963). All these deserve to be available again. **Robert Smith**, Twickenham

TAYLOR VS WINTERS

"We find Alice just as repulsive as George does," Eric Hynes writes of Shelley Winters's and Montgomery Clift's characters in *A Place in the Sun* ('An American Tragedy', S&S, March). This is not everyone's view. George Stoney of NYU's film department always said that anyone who preferred Elizabeth Taylor to Shelley Winters in that picture deserved to go to the electric chair. **Adele Paul**, Barnet

Additions and corrections

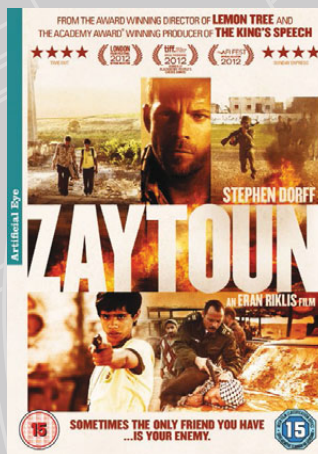
March p.89 *Breath of the Gods: A Journey to the Origins of Modern Yoga*, Cert U, 104m 46s, 9,429 ft +0 frames; p.90 *Broken*, Cert 15, 90m 44s, 8,166 ft +0 frames; p.91 *Broken City*, Cert 15, 108m 53s, 9,799 ft +0 frames; p.91 *Caesar Must Die*, Cert 12A, 76m 43s, 6,904 ft +8 frames; p.94 *Fire in the Blood*, Cert PG, 87m 14s, 7,851 ft +0 frames; p.95 *For Ellen*, Cert 15, 93m 0s, 8,370 ft +0 frames; p.84 *Gangs of Wasseypur*, Cert 15, 160m 12s, 14,418 ft +0 frames; *Gangs of Wasseypur II*, Cert 18, 159m 35s, 14,362 ft +8 frames; p.98 *The King of Pigs*: Not submitted for theatrical classification, Video cert 15, 96m 28s; p.106 *Side by Side*, Cert 15, 98m 44s, 8,886 ft +0 frames; p.109 *Verity's Summer*: Distributor: Multistory Films



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Reviews



103 **Shell**

Scott Graham's style is an arresting, unbeautified poetic realism, subjecting his protagonist's meagre routine, as she drifts from bed to stove to forecourt and back, to a close observation that seems quasi-documentary



80 Films of the month



88 Films



110 Home Cinema



122 Books



Colour wash: Gustavo Jahn as João in Kleber Mendonça Filho's 'Neighbouring Sounds'

Neighbouring Sounds

Brazil/The Netherlands 2012
Director: Kleber Mendonça Filho

Reviewed by Tony Rayns

Spoiler alert: this review reveals a plot twist

Is it harder to direct a movie if you're also a professional film critic? Kleber Mendonça Filho has thought a lot about this. His video documentary *Critico* (2008) explored the awkward space between creativity and criticism through a series of interviews recorded while he was publishing criticism in the *Jornal do Commercio* and programming an art-house in Recife. He was also directing shorts during those years, horror stories at first and then experiments in other genres and styles.

For his first fiction feature, Mendonça pushes the issue into touch and concentrates instead on delivering a densely textured panorama of nouveau-riche life in his hometown. The non-stop accumulation of detail demands close attention, and the ultimate revelation of the layers of history and social change underpinning the storylines provides plenty for Brazilian critics to chew over. It could be the best 'noises-off' movie since Bong Joonho's debut feature *Barking Dogs Never Bite* (2000), which it in some ways resembles.

Neighbouring Sounds (*O Som ao Redor*) is mostly set on one leafy street in Setúbal, a prosperous part of Recife, Brazil's fifth-biggest city. More than half the street's buildings are owned by the retired and seemingly kindly patriarch Francisco Oliveira, who got rich running a sugar mill in Bonito and these days divides his time between his luxury penthouse on the street and his country estate near the now-derelict mill. The street is home to many of Don Francisco's relatives and to a motley crowd of upwardly mobile tenants; the film creates the illusion that it's spanning the entire community – there are a few crowd scenes and plenty of walk-on/walk-off appearances – but its focus is actually narrower. Beatriz 'Bia' Linhares, stay-at-home mother of two, represents the tenants, while Don Francisco's foreign-educated nephew

João represents the Oliveira family; these two characters get the bulk of the running time. The wild card in play is the outsider Clodoaldo, who turns up going door-to-door to sell peace of mind. He and two employees are hired by the residents to provide security from 7pm to 7am.

The notion that the neighbourhood needs security is the film's best joke. All external doors and most windows already have protective metal bars and grilles in place, and gardens are closed off behind high walls. Unless you count the fact that Romualdo, who delivers giant bottles of distilled water, has a sideline selling marijuana, the only crime that occurs is the theft of a CD player from a parked car, apparently committed by João's delinquent cousin Dinho. A barefoot, dark-skinned kid from the favelas is sometimes



João and his girlfriend Sofia (Irma Brown)



Bia (Maevie Jinkings) and her children

The ultimate revelation of the layers of history and social change underpinning the storylines gives plenty for Brazilian critics to chew over

brother Claudio want revenge for a crime which occurred in Bonito nearly three decades earlier – a crime which ironically also sprang from a line of demarcation, very possibly the fence seen in the first black-and-white photograph.

It's quite a daring stratagem to spring such a narrative surprise in a film's closing moments, and it leaves Mendonça with the challenge of holding the viewer's interest across a running time of around two hours. He opted against creating other storylines to structure the film (which would certainly have reduced the impact of the final twist) and goes instead for a 'busy' flow of incident and character. The scenes involving Bia, for example, have no connection at all with the doings or past crimes of the Oliveira family and no significant narrative thrust of their own. Mendonça conceives these scenes as social satire and they provide quite a lot of the film's comedy; they seem to be an extension of his 2005 short *Eletrodoméstica*, in which a matriarch presides over a household that runs on electronic gadgets.

Bia is a chronic smoker of cigarettes and dope (when her precocious daughter complains about second-hand smoke, Bia wearily exhales into the vacuum cleaner) whose main interest in life is social climbing. She survives a brief cat-fight with a jealous neighbour who has bought a smaller flat-screen TV. She hires a Chinese woman to tutor her kids in Mandarin, and is seen furtively using her spin-dryer as an aid to masturbation, as if it's a giant vibrator. The main irritation in her life is a neighbour's barking dog, and she resorts to various comic measures to silence it, including buying an

expensive imported gadget which emits a piercing electronic tone – until the maid tries to charge its battery at the wrong voltage. All of this is amusing, and interesting enough to sustain the sense that the film is portraying a community through its individual members.

All of the film's satire is in fact relatively gentle. Except when Clodoaldo deliberately needles Dinho, the most delinquent member of the Oliveira clan, the security guards are shown to know their place: bullying the kid from the favelas, but almost exaggeratedly deferential to their social betters, including a stray Argentine who left a party to buy more booze and can't remember which house to go back to. João's on-off romance with Sofia (it starts as a one-night stand but threatens to turn into something more) offers the semblance of a thread of storyline, but is ultimately as insignificant, narratively speaking, as the other observations. Sofia's backstory (she once lived for some months on the street) adds to the tapestry of social history that Mendonça is weaving, but more interestingly her not-quite-romance with João gives Mendonça the pretext he needs for a display of cinephilia: they visit the ruins of an old cinema in Bonito and we hear on the soundtrack a memory of some lurid vintage melodrama.

The film's climactic revelation is essentially melodramatic, and Mendonça calculatedly cuts away from the payoff to a metaphor for the offscreen violence (a Hollywood cliché: it involves kids and firecrackers). This has the pleasing fringe benefit of rhyming with his larger project to excavate the layers of Setúbal's history. His sleek CinemaScope framing catches the surface politesse and controlled paranoia/guilt which covers up a history of ruthless land-grabs, slavery and subjugation of the lower classes – in short, a history redolent of old genre movies. Cinephilia turns full circle: the sound and fury of a melodramatic past remain off-screen, but never very far away. 📺

glimpsed scampering across rooftops and entering empty houses, but he doesn't steal anything and is anyway easily scared off by a punch in the face from one of Clodoaldo's men. It's unlikely that any prison movie features more shots of characters locking and unlocking doors; anytime anyone visits someone else, a maid has to be instructed to let them out through the security system. The ubiquitous security measures of course imply a latent sense of insecurity, which duly comes to the surface in a couple of brief, paranoid dream sequences. But the feeling Mendonça is really out to nail is guilt.

In a film which makes very frequent play with sounds from off-screen, it seems oddly appropriate that the storyline should also be, in some sense, off-screen. The film opens with ten old black-and-white photographs: a wooden fence, open countryside, happy workers, unhappy villagers, a palatial villa. Inexplicable when we see them at the start, these images are much later revealed to be 'flashbacks' to Bonito at the time the sugar mill was built and opened. (The 'reveal' is the photo of the resplendent newly built villa; we recognise it when we see João and his girlfriend Sofia explore it in its present state of decay.) Then, in the film's penultimate scene, we finally discover that Clodoaldo has had an ulterior motive in setting up his night-watch security business. He and his

Credits and Synopsis

Producer
Emilie Lesclaux
Screenplay
Kleber Mendonça Filho
Director of Photography
Pedro Sotero
Fabricio Tadeu
Editors
Kleber Mendonça Filho
João Maria
Art Director
Juliano Dornelles
Soundtrack
DJ Dolores
Sound Design
Kleber Mendonça Filho
Pablo Lamar
Costume Design
Ingrid Mata

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Produções Cinematográficas
e Art. Ltda.
Production Companies
Petrobras presents
a CinemaScópio production
A Kleber Mendonça Filho film
Produced with the financial support of the Hubert

Bals Fund of the International Film Festival Rotterdam
Supported by the Petrobras Cultural Program
Tax Incentives: FunCultura - Fundo Pernambucano de Incentivo à Cultura, Secretaria de Cultura - Governo do Estado de Pernambuco, Lei do Audiovisual - Agência Nacional do Cinema
Financial Support: Petrobras, Ministério da Cultura - Secretaria do Audiovisual, Hubert Bals Fund
Produced in association with Estúdios Quanta

Cast
Irandhir Santos
Clodoaldo
Gustavo Jahn
João
Maeve Jinkings
Beatriz 'Bia' Linhares
W. J. Solha
Francisco

Irma Brown
Sofia
Yuri Holanda
Dinho
Lula Terra
Tio Anco
Albert Tenório
Ronaldo
Nivaldo Nascimento
Fernando
Clébia Souza
Luciene
Sebastião Formiga
Claudio
Felipe Bandeira
Nelson
Clara Pinheiro de Oliveira
Fernanda
Mauricéia Conceição
Mária

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Artificial Eye Film Company

Brazilian theatrical title
O som ao redor

Setúbal, a suburb of Recife, Brazil. 'Part 1: Guard Dogs': The elderly Francisco Oliveira owns most buildings in one upmarket street. His son Anco and nephew João manage sales and lets when any premises are vacant. João has met Sofia at a party and she has stayed the night with him; they consider having an ongoing relationship. The stereo has been stolen from Sofia's car overnight, and João suspects his student cousin Dinho of taking it. Neighbour Bia detests the constant barking of a dog and takes inventive measures to curb it; she buys pot from the man who delivers distilled water. Clodoaldo Pereira dos Anjos pitches a night-security service to everyone on the street; the residents hire him.

'Part 2: Night Guards': Clodoaldo begins working with his employees Fernando and Ronaldo. Although Francisco has warned them to leave Dinho alone, Clodoaldo calls him anonymously to threaten him; Dinho takes it badly. **'Part 3: Bodyguards':** João takes Sofia to visit Francisco on his country estate at Bonito, where he ran a sugar mill. They explore the rundown area. The maid Luciene secretly meets Clodoaldo for sex. Fernando and Ronaldo catch a young cat-burglar and scare him off. Anco's daughter celebrates her 13th birthday with a lavish party. João tells Dinho that he and Sofia have split up. Francisco summons Clodoaldo to a late-night meeting to discuss his personal security; Clodoaldo arrives with his brother Claudio and they reveal that they are the sons of a man Francisco ordered killed in 1984...

Reality

Italy/France 2012

Director: Matteo Garrone

Certificate 15 116m 25s

Reviewed by Pasquale Iannone

Last year saw the festival premieres of no fewer than three Italian films featuring real-life prison inmates. Vincenzo Marra's documentary *The Triplet* focuses on the life of a charismatic prisoner, while *Caesar Must Die* by the Taviani brothers sees a group of inmates staging a production of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. Matteo Garrone's Cannes Grand Prix-winning *Reality* takes place outside a prison context but stars convicted *camorrista* Aniello Arena as a fishmonger obsessed with appearing on *Grande Fratello*, the Italian version of *Big Brother*.

Reality heralds a marked, deliberate shift in tone after *Gomorrah* (2008), the Rome-born director's uncompromising fresco of Neapolitan criminality. As with the earlier film, he doesn't flinch from depicting the realities of Naples's lower classes, but *Gomorrah*'s bleak, hard-edged starkness is replaced by a softer, more humanist approach. While *Gomorrah*'s Italian antecedents include the works of Francesco Rosi and Elio Petri, those of *Reality* might be found among the films of Vittorio De Sica or Pietro Germi. The clearest links, however, are with two pictures made in the early 1950s: Luchino Visconti's *Bellissima* and Federico Fellini's *The White Sheik*, which both deal affectionately with characters swept away by the allure of celebrity. The latter – Fellini's solo debut – is the tale of a young newlywed couple who arrive in Rome for their honeymoon only for the wife, Wanda (Brunella Bovo), to go in search of the hero of her favourite *fotoromanzo* stories. There is a line in *The White Sheik* that seems to foreshadow perfectly events in Garrone's new film: near the end of the picture, a tearful Wanda says, "Our real life is in our dreams, but sometimes dreams are a fatal abyss."

Reality opens with a sequence shot floating high over the skies of Naples. The camera slowly closes in on a horse-drawn carriage as it makes its way to a lavish hotel complex. There is a feeling of dreamlike weightlessness to the camera movement as we're carried through the air by a swirling wind that's straight out of Fellini. The sound of the wind segues into the fairytale tinkle of the main theme from composer Alexandre Desplat (remarkably, *Reality* represents less than an eighth of Desplat's 2012 output – other scores include Wes Anderson's *Moonrise Kingdom*, Jacques Audiard's *Rust and Bone*, Ben Affleck's *Argo* and Kathryn Bigelow's *Zero Dark Thirty*). His score perfectly captures a sense of enchantment and wonder – think the lighter side of Danny Elfman with the added understated synths of Teho Teardo.

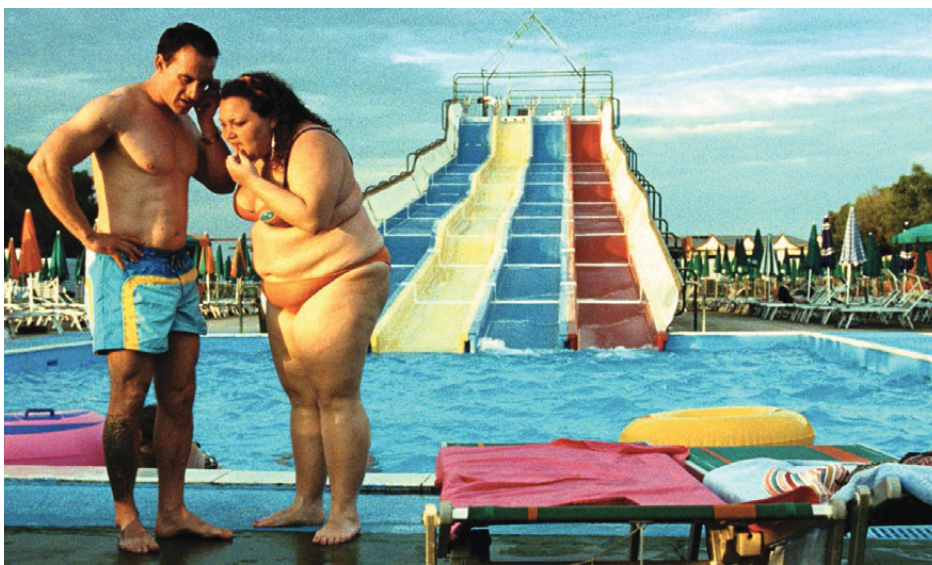
Both this first shot and the one that follows set out Garrone's formal approach, the director privileging mobile, loose sequence shots, whether moving among a group of characters or focusing in on Arena. It's a fluid approach that clearly gets the best out of his actors, especially his lead protagonist. As Luciano Ciotola, the exuberant fishmonger seduced by the prospect of fame and fortune, the 44-year-old Neapolitan is superb. Garrone insisted on casting Arena because he was



Dreams of a life: Loredana Simoli

convinced that no mainstream Italian actor of stage or screen had the right physiognomy or experience for the role. (The director had originally wanted him to appear in *Gomorrah* but the authorities refused permission on the grounds that the film's subject-matter was a little too close to Arena's real-life criminal past.) However, Arena's performance in *Reality* is all the better for being the delayed debut that it is – Luciano's wide-eyed, childlike sense of wonder is clearly that of Arena himself, finally allowed to step on to a film set for the first time. The members of the supporting cast, taken mostly from regional and national theatre, are exceptional, especially Loredana Simoli as Luciano's wife Maria and Giuseppina Cervizzi as Giusy, his excitable niece and most fervent supporter. Nando Paone's dignified, dependable cousin Michele is very much the straight man, pouring cold water whenever possible on Luciano's fiery flamboyance. If any character slips into caricature, it's that of former *Big Brother* housemate Enzo (Raffaele Ferrante). Self-satisfied and patronising, with a straw pork-pie hat to mask his bald patch, he never misses an opportunity to blurt out his catchphrase: "Nevah-geeve-ap!" The film also features a terrific cameo from Ciro Petrone –

'Reality' heralds a marked shift in tone for Garrone... The bleak, hard-edged starkness of 'Gomorrah' is replaced by a softer, more humanist approach



Downward slide: Aniello Arena, left

who played one of the teenage gangsters in *Gomorrah* – as the barista in Luciano's local café.

Gomorrah was concerned not with the people at the top but with those scrambling to survive on the ground, and the same is true of *Reality*. Garrone's new film doesn't venture down the well-trodden path of critiquing the phenomenon of reality TV. What interests the director far more is the impact of such shows on an individual psyche. "I've never had a goal in life," Luciano admits to Maria, "but since I got this thing [the *Big Brother* call], my head's spinning." This line comes during a quietly masterful sequence in which Luciano arrives outside Maria's workplace one evening; in a three-minute take we follow the couple from behind as Luciano pleads with his wife to support his decision to sell his fish stall on the basis that his appearance on *Big Brother* will assure their future. It's a step that proves disastrous, since Luciano goes no further than the second audition.


Through camera movement and *mise en scène*, Garrone shows how the clouds slowly start to gather in his protagonist's mind. Later, when the Ciotolas come together in Luciano's apartment to watch the series opener of *Big Brother*, the camera pans slowly around the dimly lit room, taking in the expensive new TV and the nervous family before settling on Luciano, brooding in almost complete darkness. Garrone – who has a distinguished background as a painter – has always excelled in the quasi-expressionist use of light, shadow and colour (notably in 2002's *The Embalmer*, though there's also the disarming neon in the opening moments of *Gomorrah*). Painterly compositions abound in *Reality* too – when the family return home after a wedding celebration, the muted, decaying tones of their apartment block (both interior and exterior) contrast sharply with the 'Big Fat Neapolitan Wedding' kitsch of the preceding scenes.

Once the first episode of *Big Brother* is aired, most members of the family resign themselves to the fact that Luciano isn't going to be part of the show. Luciano, however, rather than letting go of his ambition, becomes even more obsessed with it, and the final third of the film is concerned – like Peter Strickland's recent *Berberian Sound Studio* – with the protagonist's psychological unravelling. In one scene, Luciano becomes fixated on a



From camorrista to camera: Aniello Arena as Luciano, the fishmonger obsessed with celebrity, in Matteo Garrone's 'Reality'

cricket perched high on a cornice in his living room. In another – echoing Nicolas Roeg's *Don't Look Now* – he meets two mysterious women at a cemetery and asks them what else he has to do to be called up by *Big Brother*. His questions, rather than meeting with surprise or bewilderment, are answered with an eerie calm. "Be patient," says one of the women, "only death has no remedy, everything else works out." Garrone is undoubtedly sensitive to Luciano's drama but he never loses sight of its (often uncomfortable) comic aspect. Indeed, just when his protagonist seems to have turned the corner, his wife finds him singing to himself in a self-made *Big Brother* diary room.

Garrone shot *Reality* in sequence and considered several endings, from the positive to the downright tragic. Given the director's clear affection for his protagonist, the oneiric ambiguity of the chosen finale should come as no surprise. Rather than a cop-out, it's very much in keeping with the tone of the film as a whole. Wisely going beyond tired arguments over *Big Brother* and reality TV, *Reality* works both as a modern fairytale and as a very welcome contemporary take on the *commedia all'italiana*. 

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Domenico Procacci
Matteo Garrone
Screenplay
Maurizio Braucci
Ugo Chiti
Matteo Garrone
Massimo Gaudioso
Story
Matteo Garrone and
Massimo Gaudioso
**Director of
Photography**
Marco Onorato
Editor
Marco Spoletini

Art Director
Paolo Bonfini
**Music Composed
and Conducted by**
Alexandre Desplat
Sound Recordist
Maricetta Lombardo
Costumes
Maurizio Millenotti

©Fandango -
Archimede, Le Pacte
- Garance Capital
**Production
Companies**
An Archimede

- Fandango, Le
Pacte - Garance
Capital co-production
with RAI Cinema
Made in association
with Intesa Sanpaolo
S.p.A. in accordance
with tax credit
regulations
In association
with Soficinéma 7,
Coficup - Backup
Films, Cinéma 6,
La Sofica Manon 2
With the participation
of Canal+

A film by Matteo
Garrone

Cast
Aniello Arena
Luciano
Loredana Simioli
Maria
Nando Paone
Michele
Nunzia Schiano
aunt Nunzia
Giuseppina Cervizzi
Giusy

Nello Iorio
Massimone
Carlo Del Sorbo
Uncle Pasquale
Rosaria D'Urso
Aunt Rosaria
Graziella Marina
Luciano's mother
Alessandra
Scognamiglio
Alessandra
Martina Graziuso
Martina
Vincenzo Riccio
Vincenzo

Claudia Gerini
presenter

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Independent
Distribution

10,477 ft +8 frames

Naples, the present. Luciano Ciotola is a fishmonger with a wife, Maria, and three young children. To supplement his basic income, he sets up petty scams with the help of Maria and his cousin Michele. He's known among his family and friends for his party tricks and joviality. At a family wedding, he dresses up in drag and meets former 'Big Brother' contestant Enzo, now a minor celebrity. Delighted wedding guests insist that Luciano too is perfect for television. When his family visit a local shopping centre, they find 'Big Brother' auditions taking place. They phone Luciano but he arrives too late. However, Enzo is also present and Luciano pleads with him to be given the chance to audition. He gets through

to the next round. The family go to the Cinecittà studios, where Luciano gives a second audition. Elated by his own performance, he is convinced that the producers will call him up – so much so that on his return to Naples he sells his fish stall. Increasingly concerned that secret emissaries from 'Big Brother' have been sent to assess his character, he starts to donate newly bought items from his home to local beggars. In exasperation, Maria leaves him. After receiving treatment, Luciano starts working with Michele's church group. The cousins take the group on a trip to Rome but, once in the capital, Luciano heads for the 'Big Brother' house. Unchallenged and unnoticed, he takes a seat in the garden outside.



Doctor in trouble: Jude Law in Steven Soderbergh's 'Side Effects'

Side Effects

USA 2013

Director: Steven Soderbergh

Certificate 15 105m 46s

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

The end of a chapter or the end of the story? Steven Soderbergh has made no bones about the fact that this twisty thriller is his last theatrical feature. Still to come is his Liberace cable movie *Behind the Candelabra*, and then, having reached his 50th birthday in January of this year, he will apparently be seeking other creative outlets. Since he's turned out what more or less amounts to a film a year since *sex, lies, and videotape* made him the toast of Cannes back in 1989, he's already given us enough movies for several directorial careers – though one effect of reaching this seeming milestone moment now is to throw a piercing spotlight on his supposed final offering. In the circumstances, Soderbergh's third collaboration with screenwriter Scott Z. Burns looks just a little uncomfortable in the glare.

As the title suggests, *Side Effects* comes on like it's spoiling for a fight with the pharmaceuticals industry. After an ominous opening pan across a relatively swish apartment building, the camera moves inside to reveal blood on the kitchen floor. Cue explanatory flashback, and we meet Rooney Mara's edgy, wide-eyed Emily, a troubled spouse whose anxiety may stem from her husband's imminent release from jail after serving time for insider dealing. Or it might possibly flag up ongoing issues with depression,

which could yet drag her to deeper and darker places. The hubby (Channing Tatum, playing a hedge-fund variation on Magic Mike) is kindly and concerned, but his career ambitions have a place for a trophy wife which Emily, in her current state, may not be able to fill. The upshot is a head-on smash into a car-park wall that looks positively suicidal, and leads Emily into the orbit of Jude Law's hospital psychologist Dr Jonathan Banks. He happens to have a private practice, and has signed up as a paid consultant to conduct patient trials on a new-to-market SSRI named Ablixia. That's a 'selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor', by the way, a form of medication to control the chemical imbalances which otherwise allow depressive impulses to get the better of those so afflicted.

It's not hard to draw a line from the drug's prescription to even more erratic behaviour to the aforementioned body oozing life on the kitchen floor, yet the anti-corporate cautionary tale taking shape in the early reels proves far from the end of the matter, since Soderbergh and Burns evidently have a bit of genre-morphing on their minds. Mara's glazed expression certainly sells us a nightmare thriller scenario predicated on female vulnerability, but just when the film seems to have settled into that particular rubric, it sidesteps into a different bad-dream scenario as Dr Banks – who previously seemed the acme of moral flexibility – now takes centre stage in a wronged-man procedural. As the movie begins to shift course, we initially read him as someone hoist by his own rather sleek petard, but there may yet be something in his

crackpot theories deconstructing everything we've just seen – or *think* we've just seen. It's not giving too much away to mention the archetypal narrative bait-and-switch at this point, since that's not the end of it either, which is where *Side Effects* starts getting slippery to a fault, and seriously problematic with it.

Further stop-offs en route include a hormonally charged digression into what appears to be disreputable 'erotic thriller' territory (involving a very game Catherine Zeta-Jones, done up in scraped-back hair and big horn-rims like some latterday Barbara Steele), followed by an ending of such neatly primed contrivance that one can only groan. Yes, it brings the plot-spinning to a halt, and gives us an answer to the story's who and what and wherefore, yet the why, why, whys of all we've just witnessed remain unfathomable. And not in a good way.

Compare this to Soderbergh and Burns's previous collaboration *The Informant!* (2009), which also comes on like some corporate exposé only to peel the layers off Matt Damon's dangerously unreliable protagonist, a courageous whistleblower whose fragmented personality gives him no qualms about embezzling millions from his nefarious blue-chip employers. His psychological caprices prove, in the end, beyond anyone's comprehension, least of all his own, but it's precisely because of this that he's fitted as such an awkward cog in the billion-dollar machine, thus giving the film an overriding purpose beyond its dizzying industrial-espionage chicanery. What's more, Soderbergh conjures



The anti-corporate tale taking shape in the early reels proves far from the end of the matter, since Soderbergh evidently has a bit of genre-morphing in mind

up a formal pattern to match, a seemingly inconsequential trivia-saturated first-person narration and the peppy counterblasts of Marvin Hamlisch's nutty lounge-muzak score staking out a weirdly unsettling jollity which finally makes sense when the full extent of Damon's activities becomes clear.

In the case of *Side Effects*, that sense of purpose doesn't quite stack up. The story gathers itself to suggest that our facility for intuiting motivation by analysing patterns of human behaviour only leaves us open to manipulation by those who can fake the right moves – the resonances for the moviemaker's craft being obvious – but such notions are rather undercut by the tricky mechanics proving just a bit too insistent and exposed to sustain credibility. The narrative pirouettes are cheekily disarming but ultimately they don't really go anywhere – even if Mara's Edith Scob blankness is a wonder to behold and Jude Law's reinvention as a useful character actor continues apace with his adept line in ersatz sincerity.

Moreover, Soderbergh himself also seems to have reverted to default formal mode, once more serving as cameraman (credited to 'Peter Andrews') and editor ('Mary Ann Bernard') and moving things along with the characteristically confident efficiency seen in 2011's *Contagion* and *Haywire*. The colour palette boasts warm yet somehow synthetic amber interiors, contrasting with cooler blue tones when glacial distancing is required. Depth and space within the frame explore the emotive connotations of individuals in familiar or unfamiliar spaces, while disorienting surprises in the return angles during shot/countershot conversations, and a repeated trick of holding just a little too long on certain architectural features (walls, revolving doors), deliver frissons of unease as and when required. It's masterly stuff, of course, yet there's just not that extra gear Soderbergh found in *The Informant!*, which surely ranks alongside the looser, performance-driven cuddliness of *Magic Mike* (2012) as the most all-round successful of his recent assignments.

One can see how the sleight of hand in Burns's script might have tempted Soderbergh

towards a contemporary spin on familiar Hitchcockian moves (complete with pharmaceutical macguffin), and perhaps at this stage, having visited most parts of the generic spectrum and traversed the gamut from indie quirkery to mainstream gloss, that was one of the few challenges still left to him. Yet in applying himself to the task of a story whose centre of gravity proves elusive, some of the same issues that cropped up in the restless ensemble approach of *Contagion* come to the fore again. The craft is impeccable, yet these carefully modulated frames never quite add up to a through-line of emotional empathy. A certain niggling distance remains, and it leaves us wondering whether Soderbergh's self-declared retirement, were it to prove thankfully temporary, might yet give him time to reflect on squaring the circle, to ponder how he can exercise his own controlling formal rigour in a way that doesn't stifle the human element on screen but brings it out even more. Here's to the next time, since *Side Effects* is surely not how he should, or will, be remembered. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Lorenzo di Bonaventura
Gregory Jacobs
Scott Z. Burns

Written by

Scott Z. Burns

Director of

Photography

Peter Andrews

[i.e. Steven Soderbergh]

Edited by

Mary Ann Bernard

[i.e. Steven Soderbergh]

Production Design

Howard Cummings

Music

Thomas Newman

Production

Sound Mixer

Dennis Towns

Costume Designer

Susan Lyall

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Distribution, LLC.

Production

Companies

Endgame

Entertainment

presents

in association

with Filmmation

Entertainment

Filmed with the

support of the

New York State

Governor's Office

for Motion Picture

Development

Executive

Producers

James D. Stern

Michael Polaire

Douglas E. Hansen

Cast

Jude Law

Dr Jonathan Banks

Rooney Mara

Emily Taylor

Catherine

Zeta-Jones

Dr Victoria Siebert

Channing Tatum

Martin Taylor

Vinessa Shaw

Dierdre Banks

Ann Dowd

Martin's mother

Dolby Digital/

Datasat

In Colour

[1.85:1]

Distributor

EI Films

5,919 ft +0 frames

New York, present day. Emily Taylor struggles with depression following the release from prison of her husband Martin, who has served time for insider trading. Following an apparent attempt to commit suicide by driving at speed into a car-park wall, Emily is assessed by psychologist Dr Jonathan Banks, who agrees to release her from hospital if she attends his private practice. Dr Banks believes that prescription drugs will quell her depressive urges; his fellow psychologist Dr Victoria Siebert, who previously treated Emily, recommends a new antidepressant named Ablixa. After a public breakdown at a gala reception with Martin, Emily persuades Dr Banks to prescribe Ablixa, since he's just signed on as a paid consultant for the manufacturers. At first her mood brightens considerably, but then she stabs her husband to death in their apartment and claims to remember nothing. Since sleepwalking is a recognised symptom of Ablixa, Emily claims innocence, and cuts a deal with the prosecutors to enter mental-health supervision. The resulting storm of bad publicity leads to Dr Banks being fired by Ablixa's manufacturers; he also loses his practice. Obsessively going through the fine detail of the case, Dr Banks discovers that Emily faked the side effects to evade a murder conviction, and was working in league with her former lover Dr Siebert to effect a lucrative shares scam. Dr Banks has Emily temporarily released so that the police can use her to entrap Dr Siebert, who is subsequently arrested. Emily is permanently sectioned. Dr Banks rebuilds his life and career.



Rooney Mara as Emily and Channing Tatum as her husband Martin



Partying politics: Clement Attlee and supporters celebrate Labour's triumph in the 1945 general election

The Spirit of '45

United Kingdom 2012
Director: Ken Loach
Certificate U 98m 19s

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

Socialism. Not a word we've heard from leaders of the Labour Party too often in recent decades. But here's Clem Attlee, fresh from his party's triumph in the 1945 election, when Labour was returned with an overall majority of 146 seats, announcing to a packed Westminster Central Hall that he intends to lead "a Labour movement with a socialist policy" and being cheered to the rafters.

Ken Loach's film is a celebration and a lament. Using interviews, archive footage and excerpts from the rich documentary heritage of the period, it celebrates the moment of idealism when demobbed troops "came back imbued with that spirit of anything is possible". Much of this radical spirit, we're reminded, stemmed from educational initiatives within the conscript forces, with troops encouraged to attend discussions on politics and current

affairs. We see impassioned (if obviously staged) debates on how things might change after the war. And in a richly comic episode a fruity-voiced Tory MP, Maurice Petherick, reads out a letter from a constituent deploring such potentially disruptive practices: "I maintain most strongly that any of these subjects which turn towards politics are wrong. For the love of Mike do something about it unless you want to have the creatures coming back all pansy-pink."

As it turned out, such reactionaries weren't so far wrong: 1945 was a moment when it really seemed, however naive it may appear today, that it might be feasible to fulfil the plea made by pre-war Labour leader George Lansbury to build the New Jerusalem "in England's green and pleasant land". There was a determination, according to pioneering GP Julian Tudor Hart, that we were "not going back to the Britain of the 1930s – never again". What's most striking about the testimonies, direct or reported, from the witnesses Loach has assembled is the sense of total identification, the deeply personal pride that people took in the developments of the post-war world. Deborah Garvie, a present-day housing worker, shows us the letter her builder

grandfather received telling him that he had been assigned a council house in Stevenage New Town – a town that he himself had helped to build. This letter, she tells us, he carried with him in his wallet till the day he died.

Likewise Ray Jackson, former train driver, describes his delighted amazement when his family moved into their new council house with its French windows and indoor facilities. "There was all this light! And there were stairs! And a bathroom!" Professor Harry Keen relives the gratification he felt when, as a North London GP visiting a mother worried she couldn't afford his services or the medicines he prescribed – a visit he made on the very day the National Health Service was inaugurated – he was able to tell her, "Today, July the 5th, it'll cost you nothing! I've never forgotten that moment."

Repeatedly we're told of people's elation at the idea that "at last we're going to take charge of our own lives". Ray Davies, a retired Welsh miner, recalls his whole community "cheering, laughing, singing, dancing" at the news that the mines were being nationalised, and seeing some of his hardened fellow miners,



Red house: news spreads of Labour's gains in the election



No turning back: returning troops were imbued with the desire for change

men who “were rough and... tough, they would take anything the bosses ever threw at them”, with tears rolling down their cheeks. Not that nationalisation in reality spelt power to the people; as Tony Benn observes, the whole process was inherently top-down, and “the idea that people who worked in an industry had any say in how the industry was run was completely foreign.” Another ex-miner remembers his disgust at seeing Lord Hyndley, a prominent mine-owner who had campaigned long and vehemently against nationalisation, being made chairman of the National Coal Board. “What sort of nationalisation have we got? The same old gang back in power!”

Even so, the post-war dispensation in the UK marked a concerted move to bury – forever, it was hoped – the pre-war world where, as Julian Tudor Hart puts it, “everything was run by rich people for rich people.” Labour’s 1945 election manifesto was explicit in placing the blame: the slumps of the 30s, it stated, “were the sure and certain result of the concentration of too much economic power in the hands of too few men... The cost of ‘economic freedom’ is too high if it is bought at the cost of idleness and misery for millions.” Here,

as elsewhere in Loach’s film, the pre-echoes of present-day conditions are resonant.

The first two-thirds of the film culminate in the spindly technogeek hoopla of the 1951 Festival of Britain – a brave show of fragile national pride put on to lighten the day-to-day austerity (food, clothes, fuel were still rationed) stemming from the crippling outlay of the war effort and the cost of establishing the welfare state. Loach doesn’t mention how the Festival was petulantly junked after the Tories regained power in October of that year. Instead we fade to black, then abruptly jump ahead to a yet more fateful year: 1979, when Margaret Thatcher gained her first electoral victory. And, following her oleaginous quoting of Francis of Assisi (“Where there is discord, may we bring harmony... Where there is despair, may we bring hope”), the melancholy – or triumphal,

Loach’s film is unashamedly polemical – an eloquent cry of rage and grief at what we once had and what we’ve allowed to be taken away from us

depending on your political leanings – recital begins, as one by one the nationalisations of the post-war era are reversed, and gas, steel, water, electricity, the railways and all the rest are sold back into private hands at bargain rates.

At the same time, we see other key elements of the welfare state being chipped away – council houses sold off, bit-by-bit privatisation eroding the Royal Mail and the NHS. Interspersed with this, the key defeats of working-class power: the miners’ strike of 1984, the Liverpool dockers’ strike of 1995. An outraged miner denounces the police brutality suffered by himself and his fellow-miners: “Why do the police come with such venom? They seem to enjoy inflicting pain and suffering on the working man. Why? Who tells them to go beat a picket’s head? Who tells them to inflict pain, try to kill him? Who is it? I want to know.” By way of response Loach cuts straight to Thatcher at that year’s Tory Party conference, beaming in triumph at a jubilant ovation.

Loach has covered some of this territory before: the dock strike in *The Flickering Flame* (1996), the privatisation of the railways in *The Navigators* (2001), not to mention his 1995 short *A Contemporary Case for Common Ownership*. But *The Spirit of ’45* is his most sustained account to date of what was gained in post-war Britain and then, four decades later, systematically dismantled – and dismantled, as BMA Council member Jacky Davis points out, by the very people “who grew up with and benefited from that system”.

“In these opinionated times,” *Empire* reviewer David Hughes recently noted, “documentary” is often a synonym for ‘polemic.’ Loach’s film is openly, unashamedly polemical and partisan – an eloquent cry of rage and grief at what we once had and what we’ve allowed to be taken away from us. It’s a challenge, too. Building on the impassioned testimonies of his interviewees and on his superbly chosen archive footage – courtesy of archivist Jim Anderson, who did an equally skilled job for Terence Davies’s *Of Time and the City* (2008) – Loach challenges us to resist, to fight back against the forces of private greed and indifference. The film ends with shots of mass protests – Occupy, UK Uncut, Defend the NHS – as ‘Jerusalem’ swells on the soundtrack. Loach is too intelligent a filmmaker to suggest that resistance will be easy – but too optimistic to say that it’s impossible. 📌

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

Rebecca O’Brien
Kate Ogborn
Lisa Marie Russo

Photography

Stephen Standen

Editor

Jonathan Morris

Original Music

George Fenton

Sound

Paul Parsons

Kevin Brazier

Ian Tapp

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The British Film

Institute/Channel

Four Television

Corporation

Production

Companies

The British Film

Institute and Film

4, Sixteen Films

and Fly Film

Developed with EM

Media and the UK

Film Council’s Digital

Film Archive Fund

Produced with the

support investment

of Channel Four

Television Corporation

Digital project

supported by Creative

England, Film 4.0, BFI

Made with the support

of the BFI’s Film Fund

Dolby Digital

In Black & White

and Colour

[1.85:1]

Distributor

Dogwoof

8,848 ft +8 frames

Britain, 8 May 1945. There are scenes of relief and jubilation as the country celebrates VE Day – cheering crowds, dancing in the streets, reunited couples embracing. We flashback to the Blitz, and then to the 1920s and 30s, and the mass unemployment, poverty and deprivation that followed the end of WWI. Veterans of that period recall growing up in slum conditions, and the determination at the end of WWII that this wouldn’t happen again. In July 1945, Clement Attlee leads Labour to an unforeseen landslide victory at the general election. Despite the country’s dire economic situation after six years of war, the new government initiates a massive programme of social reform, partly guided by the Beveridge Report. The coalmines are nationalised, along with the steel industry, the docks, the railways, electricity, gas and water. The National

Health Service is founded, offering universal free healthcare. Millions are rehoused in newly built council houses. People who lived through this period recall their elation at these changes, though a few voice their misgivings at seeing the same old bosses put in charge of the newly nationalised industries. The mood of the post-war years culminates in the Festival of Britain.

In 1979, the Tories take power under Margaret Thatcher. Over the next 15 years the structure of the welfare state is steadily dismantled and sold off. One by one, the industries that were nationalised in the late 1940s are privatised. The NHS is subjected to piecemeal privatisation, as is the Royal Mail. But in recent years the attack on the NHS, in the wake of the market collapse, inspires resistance. The Spirit of ’45 may not yet be dead.

All Things to All Men

United Kingdom 2012
Director: George Isaac

Reviewed by Thirza Wakefield

Debuting director George Isaac plays it safe with this capable but derivative British crime thriller starring Gabriel Byrne, Rufus Sewell and Toby Stephens. If there's any ingenuity here, it's in Isaac's disdaining the plastic tablecloth charisma of *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* for a more sober alternative. Unfortunately, this doesn't pay dividends. *All Things* is dully realised, with routine POVs through glass or between car headrests, and characters so formulaic that one wonders how the producers pinned the sophisticated cast. The film is excessively pleased with its hallmark British locations (the London Eye, Battersea Power Station), though its liking for grown-boys' toys – white Jags and helicopters – neutralises the benefits of any our-neck-of-the-woods fetishism. At least the clammy unravelling of Sewell's hubristic detective tautens the slack at the film's shootout finale. Ⓜ



Total wipeout: Toby Stephens

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Pierre Mascolo
George Isaac
Written by
George Isaac
Director of Photography
Howard Atherton
Editor
Eddie Hamilton
Production Designer
Matthew Button
Music
Thomas Wander
Sound Recordist
Rudi Buckle
Costume Designer
Hayley Nebauer

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Production Companies
TBC
Executive Producer
Toni Mascolo

Cast
Rufus Sewell
Parker
Toby Stephens
Riley
Elsa Pataky
Sophia Peters
Leo Gregory
Dixon
Julian Sands
Cutter
Ralph Brown
Mc'Deer
Terence Maynard
Sands

Pierre Mascolo
Mark Corso
Michael Harvey
Curtis Carter
Gil Darnell
Adrian Peters
Neil Maskell
Luke Nelson
Tom Davis
Roberts
James Frain
Attorney General
David Schofield
police commissioner
Gabriel Byrne
Joseph Corso

In Colour

Distributor
The Muscolo Group

London, the present. Thief Riley delivers stolen diamonds to his partner Peters and arranges to collect his share of the proceeds in three days' time. Crooked detective Parker and his unsuspecting colleagues Dixon and Sands offer crime boss Corso a stake of the diamond money if he will intercept it. Riley finds Peters dead, murdered by Corso. Corso coerces Riley into another heist, claiming Riley's share of the diamond money as commission. The additional robbery completed, Corso's bodyguard turns on Riley but is killed in a car chase. Riley absconds with the money, taking refuge with Peters's widow Sophia. Sands learns that Parker needs the money to settle a debt; it also transpires that the attorney general and the police commissioner are involved in the corruption. Parker kills Sands and arranges Dixon's murder. Riley arranges to meet Corso at Battersea Power Station. There, Corso and Sophia are killed. Parker is shot dead by the escaped Dixon, who is afterwards promoted to detective and initiated into the world of state corruption.

Arbitrage

USA/Poland 2012
Director: Nicholas Jarecki
Certificate 15 106m 37s

Reviewed by Geoffrey Macnab

Nicholas Jarecki's debut feature is one of a spate of films about crooked financiers made since the Enron affair, the disgrace of Bernie Madoff and the economic crisis of 2008. Richard Gere is the seemingly ultra-respectable financier Robert Miller – a family man who does his bit for charity and is a patron of the arts. We soon discover, however, that he is a fraudster who cheats in both his professional and personal life. He's far more charismatic than Madoff but, like Madoff with his Ponzi scheme, he uses his wealth and respectability to get away with outrageous wrongdoing.

Jarecki is the younger brother of Andrew Jarecki, director of the harrowing and very intimate family portrait *Capturing the Friedmans* (2003), and of Eugene Jarecki, who has made such probing documentaries as *Why We Fight* (2004, about the arms industry) and *The House I Live In* (2012, an exposé of the 'war on drugs' in America). *Arbitrage* works equally well as a study of an individual destroying his family and as a drama about corruption and hypocrisy in American corporate life.

In interviews, Jarecki has talked of his debt to 70s American cinema and to the work of William Friedkin and James Toback. The plot of *Arbitrage* may seem familiar enough from countless other movies and TV dramas about white-collar criminality (for example *Damages*), but there's a grittiness and intensity here that slicker, bigger-budget films don't always match. It helps, too, that like Oliver Stone, whose father was a stockbroker, Jarecki has first-hand knowledge of Wall Street through his parents, who were traders.

Arbitrage is certainly the filip that Richard Gere's stuttering career needed. In his early films such as *Looking for Mr. Goodbar* (1977), *American Gigolo* (1980) and *Breathless* (1983), Gere had a restless and predatory quality that made him one of the most lively and unpredictable leading men of his era. That menacing quality was evident when he played the corrupt cop in Mike Figgis's *Internal Affairs* (1989), and you could still see his



Deal or no deal: Susan Sarandon, Richard Gere

recklessness in Figgis's *Mr Jones* (1993), in which he played a manic depressive. In the past 20 years there has been too much bland mainstream fare, but here he's playing another reckless delinquent with the same mix of narcissism and charm as the characters he played in his prime. He excels in a role that suits him exceptionally well.

Plot-wise, *Arbitrage* doesn't break new ground – the combination of family melodrama and corporate skullduggery stretches back in US fiction as far as Theodore Dreiser, and there have been many other movies about family patriarchs who turn out to be corrupt. The film's strength is not in its themes but in the intensity with which it treats them. Gere's febrile performance is matched by an equally strong one from Susan Sarandon as his aggrieved wife. Tim Roth is effective too as the dour but very determined blue-collar cop trying to pull him down from his ivory tower.

Like the best movie villains, Miller is bound to provoke ambivalence in audiences. He's ruthless, unscrupulous and not in the least bothered by any qualms of conscience at the destruction he wreaks around him. At the same time, he is so engaging and resourceful that audiences may end up rooting for him against their better instincts. Ⓜ

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Laura Bickford
Kevin Turen
Justin Nappi
Robert Salerno
Written by
Nicholas Jarecki
Director of Photography
Yorick Le Saux
Film Editor
Douglas Crise
Production Designer
Beth Mickle
Music
Cliff Martinez
Sound Mixer
Tod Maitland
Costume Designer
Joseph G. Aulisi

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Production Companies
Green Room Films
and Treehouse
Pictures present

a co-production
of Parlay Films,
LB Productions,
Artina Films
in association
with Alvernia
Studios, Lucky
Monkey Pictures
A film by Nicholas
Jarecki
Executive Producers
Brian Young
Mohammed Al Turki
Lisa Wilson
Stanislaw Tyczynski,
Lauren Versel
Maria Teresa Arida
Ron Curtis

Cast
Richard Gere
Robert Miller
Susan Sarandon
Ellen Miller
Tim Roth
Detective

Michael Bryer
Brit Marling
Brooke Miller
Laetitia Casta
Julie Cote
Nate Parker
Jimmy Grant
Stuart Margolin
Syd Felder
Chris Eigeman
Gavin Briar

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[L.85:1]

Distributor
Koch Media
Entertainment

9,595 ft +8 frames

US, present day. Financier Robert Miller runs one of New York's most respected hedge funds. He gives money to charity and appears to be a devoted family man. However, one of his deals has gone sour; he has been fiddling his firm's books as he waits to close the deal that he hopes will cover his losses.

Miller has a mistress, a young French artist called Julie. One night, driving out of town with her, they have a car accident. She is killed and the car is smashed. He is injured but makes his way back to New York and pretends he spent the night at home with his wife. Bryer, a dogged detective, investigates the case; suspicious, he arrests Jimmy, the young black man from Harlem who gave Miller (a family friend) a lift. Bryer puts pressure on Jimmy to reveal that he drove Miller back to town, threatening him with prison.

Miller's daughter realises her father's fraud. His wife is incensed and threatens to reveal that he came home late on the night of Julie's death. It emerges that Bryer fabricated evidence in his rush to prosecute Jimmy and get to Miller. The case against Jimmy is dismissed. Miller closes the deal and saves his company from bankruptcy.

Beautiful Creatures

USA 2013
Director: Richard LaGravenese
Certificate 12A 123m 34s

Reviewed by Anna Smith

A small town is enlivened by the arrival of a "Caster" – someone with magic powers – in this peppy teen romance from Richard LaGravenese (*Freedom Writers*), based on the novel by Kami Garcia and Margaret Stohl. Lena is a mysterious brooding loner who promises one of the key themes of *Beautiful Creatures*: escape. Bored, bright teen Ethan dreams of leaving Gatlin, his South Carolina hometown, routinely parking his car in sight of the exit to the highway (a shot the film returns to several times). While Lena is scared by her supernatural powers, Ethan is excited: she's the most interesting thing to happen in ages.

It's a familiar device that recalls not just the recent *Twilight* series but also more arch, adult supernatural films such as *The Witches of Eastwick* (1987). Small-town archetypes are comically portrayed by a witty script, and camp characters abound. The plot, though, is muddled: Lena's visions of ancestral tragedies are dramatically portrayed but their meaning is almost lost in would-be explanatory waffle. But if *Beautiful Creatures* doesn't stand up as an engaging myth, it does at least entertain along the way. **C**



Caster sugar:
Alice Englert

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Erwin Stoff
Andrew A. Kosove
Broderick Johnson
Molly Mickler Smith
David Valdes

Written for the screen by

Richard LaGravenese
Based on the novel by Kami Garcia and Margaret Stohl

Director of Photography

Philippe Rousselot

Film Editor

David Moritz

Production Designer

Richard Sherman

Music

thenewno2

Sound Mixer

Jeffrey E. Haupt

Costume Designer

Jeffrey Kurland

Alcon

Entertainment, LLC

Production Companies

Alcon Entertainment

presents a 3 Arts

Entertainment/Belle

Pictures production

Executive Producer

Yolanda T. Cochran

Film Extracts

Gilda (1946)

Cast

Alden Ehrenreich

Ethan Wate

Alice Englert

Lena Duchannes

Jeremy Irons

Macon Ravenwood

Viola Davis

Amma

Emmy Rossum

Ridley Duchannes

Thomas Mann

Link

Emma Thompson

Mrs Lincoln/Sarafine

Eileen Atkins

gramma

Margo Martindale

aunt Del

Zoey Deutch

Emily Asher

Tiffany Boone

Savannah Snow

Rachel Brosnahan

Genevieve

Duchannes

Dolby Digital

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Distributor

Entertainment Film

Distributors Ltd

11,121 ft +0 frames

Gatlin, South Carolina, the present. Fifteen-year-old Lena arrives to stay with her Uncle Macon. She dates schoolmate Ethan, who is let in on a secret: Lena is a "Caster" and, because of a family curse, will turn either "dark" or "light" on her 16th birthday. Lena's family of fellow Casters fear that Ethan will distract Lena, resulting in her turning dark. Lena discovers that the curse can only be broken by the death of one she loves. She puts a spell on Ethan, making him forget their relationship. Ethan is fatally shot during a Civil War re-enactment, but magically Macon takes his place. Ethan lives. Weeks later, about to travel to New York, Ethan has a conversation with Lena as if they barely know each other. Soon afterwards, he stops the car and gets out, calling Lena's name.

Beyond the Hills

Romania/France/Belgium 2012
Director: Cristian Mungiu
Certificate 12A 151m 55s



Enduring love: Cosmina Stratan, Cristina Flutur

Reviewed by Nick Roddick

Romanian director Cristian Mungiu's third feature takes several confident steps towards the mastery that his second, *4 Months, 3 Weeks and 2 Days* (2007), revealed to be within his grasp, thematically and above all stylistically.

The new film is set 15 years later – sometime after the introduction of the euro in 1999 but before devaluation and Romania's entry into the EU in 2007 – and confirms Mungiu as a humanist with an approach very similar to spiritually inclined directors such as Bresson and Tarkovsky, with whom he shares certain key stylistic preoccupations. Above all, both films are carefully structured, 4, 3, 2 around the notion of time (as in the title), *Beyond the Hills*, again as the title implies, around the idea of place – or rather the contrast between different places: between Romania, where the story is set, and Germany, the locus of flight, freedom (or at any rate greater opportunity) and decadence. Then there is the opposition between the town, with its everyday concerns and *laissez-faire* attitude, and the isolated monastery, first seen looming over the horizon in a virtuoso tracking shot as two young women approach this place "beyond the hills". Both films have two female protagonists, one stronger than the other, confronted with a patriarchal figure (there Mr Bebe, here Papa, the leader of the monastery's austere religious community). There are stylistic similarities too: *Beyond the Hills* opens with Mungiu's trademark back-of-the-head shot as one of the girls, Voichita, pushes her way through the crowds at a railway station to find her friend Alina. The women grew up together in an orphanage, and now Alina has returned after several years in Germany; she hopes to take Voichita away with her, but the latter is fully committed to her life at the monastery.

Beyond the Hills is a much more complex and ambitious work than 4, 3, 2, championing love and questioning religion's attempt to

Credits and Synopsis

Producer

Cristian Mungiu

Written by

Cristian Mungiu

Inspired by

the non-fiction

novels of Titi

Niculescu Bran

Director of Photography

Oleg Mutu

Film Editing

Mircea Olteanu

Production Design

Calin Papura

Mihaela Poenaru

Sound Mixer

Cristinel Sirli

Costume Design

Dana Paparuz

©Mobra Films - Why

Not Productions -

Les Films du Fleuve

- France 3 Cinéma

- Mandragora Movies

Production Companies

Mobra Films present

Co-producers: Why

Not Productions,

Les Films de Fleuve,

France 3 Cinéma,

Mandragora Movies

A film produced

with the support of

Centrul National

al Cinematografiei,

Eurimages, Centre

National du Cinéma

et de l'Image Animé

and the participation

of Canal+, France

Televisions, Ciné+,

Wild Bunch

Cast

Cosmina Stratan

Voichita

Cristina Flutur

Alina

Valeriu Andriuta

Papa, priest

Dana Tapalaga

mother superior

Catalina Harabagiu

Sister Antonia

Gina Tandura

Sister Iustina

Vica Agache

Sister Elisabeta

Nora Covali

Sister Pahomia

Dionisie Vitcu

Mr Alina

Ionut Ghinea

Ionut

Liliana Mocanu

Mother Elena

Doru Ana

Father Nusu

Dolby Digital

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Subtitles

Distributor

Artificial Eye

Film Company

13,672 ft +8 frames

Romanian

theatrical title

Dupa dealuri

Romania, the recent past. After working in Germany, a young woman, Alina, returns to visit Voichita, with whom she used to share a room in the local orphanage. Voichita is now a member of an austere religious community run by "Papa" and his partner "Mother." Alina's plans to take Voichita back to Germany with her come up against the latter's total commitment to the community. Papa urges Alina to confess her sins and turn to God, but she resists. Her behaviour becomes increasingly strange and, after a particularly violent outburst, she is hospitalised. Apparently cured and with Voichita begging Papa to let her come back, Alina returns to the monastery, but her behaviour becomes more and more erratic; strange things are reported and demonic possession is suspected. Alina is tied to a makeshift stretcher while Papa attempts to cast out the demon. Shortly after another apparent recovery, she dies. A police investigation is launched.

appropriate it by labelling it divine. Most striking here is the restraint with which Mungiu handles what turns out to be a story of religious fanaticism, murder, demonic possession and repressed sexuality (which, according to a tiny mention in the end credits, is based on real events). Thus while the plot summary may suggest that fashionable subgenre, the 'real-life' exorcism movie, we are a long way from *The Exorcism of Emily Rose* (though closer, at times, to Hans-Christian Schmid's more restrained, German-set *Requiem*, based on the same occurrences). The potentially horrific binding of Alina to a cross-shaped stretcher in the climactic exorcism scene has a matter-of-fact, almost farcical tone as the nuns struggle to hold her down – "Tie her with this!" "This one's too short!" "Try this!" "It's no good: I can't hammer with her like that!" – rather as though the crucifixion were being re-enacted by the Marx Brothers (though any humour abruptly evaporates when the chain used to tie up a dog is wrapped round Alina).

Whether or not Alina is demonically possessed or mentally ill is never explored. Nor are the sexual implications of Papa's hold over the girls – does he indeed "fuck" them, as Alina suggests? Nor the hint of sex trafficking that goes with the mention of the mysterious Herr Pfaff, who used to visit the orphanage from Germany, took photographs and left Alina a camcorder. Elements like this provide the film with a rich backstory but no hint of motive or cause. Instead, Mungiu's unblinking focus is on the love between the two girls, clearly (though never explicitly) sexual, pitted against the much more powerful and codified love of God, with which Alina cannot compete. "If I let God into my heart, will you start loving me again", she asks Voichita in one of the film's key scenes. But although there is a clear sense of Alina and Voichita as fragile free spirits crushed by a religion that helpfully provides its adherents with a menu of 464 sins to choose from, there is no real attempt to demonise Papa, who seems for most of the time to be genuinely trying to find a solution to this troublesome cuckoo who has shown up in his nest.

The temptation to make the girls straightforward victims is likewise avoided. Alina comes across as surly and confrontational, Voichita as genuinely comfortable in her faith. And there is a beautiful little scene in the hospital after Alina has been pronounced dead by a doctor who might function as the voice of scientific reason but seems, instead, more interested in her mobile phone. "God help anyone who falls into your hands," she says to the community's 'Mother', who comes right back with, "God forgive me, but the same goes for you doctors." No one other than Voichita, meanwhile, seems to care much about Alina.

Following a measured pace with occasional flurries of violence, *Beyond the Hills* is a scrupulously neutral look at events which flare up in a world that is, at base, indifferent. And Mungiu's great achievement is to hold these two concepts – love and indifference – in balance, nowhere more skilfully than in the film's final shot, one of the most eloquent and perfectly orchestrated in cinema history. **S**

Dragon

Hong Kong/People's Republic of China 2011

Director: Peter Ho-sun Chan

Reviewed by Ashley Clark

A huge box-office success on its initial release in Hong Kong in 2011, Peter Chan's *Dragon* stars actor-cum-choreographer Donnie Yen (*Ip Man*) as Liu Jinxi, a quiet family man in early Republican China who responds with brutal efficiency when a pair of ne'er-do-wells threaten his tightknit community. Narratively speaking, there's precious little to separate *Dragon*'s early stages from David Cronenberg's gripping neo-western *A History of Violence* (2005) – and that film's themes of identity, retribution and responsibility ring just as resoundingly here.

Where *Dragon* departs from Cronenberg's film (other than in its setting and martial-arts fighting) is in the introduction of a police-procedural element, which unfortunately also happens to be its least effective conceit. The narrative reins (including a sporadic doomy voiceover) are handed to the cynical, hardboiled investigator Xu, who seems to have wandered in from another film. Dressed like a P.G. Wodehouse character, Xu is avowedly misanthropic, not to mention genuinely repellent (at one point he shakes down his wife for cash, even though he's recently been responsible for her father's suicide). Matters aren't helped by Kaneshiro Takeshi's performance; with his wild, darting eyes and inert physicality, he pulls off the disconcerting trick of overacting and underacting simultaneously. He's no match for Yen in terms of charisma or narrative interest, and the dual-protagonist approach feels imbalanced and unnecessary. However, the self-loathing Xu ushers in one of the film's more interesting themes: the perceived inseparability of man and beast, and consequently the real worth of mankind ("Men are just stinking sacks of fluids with no redeeming qualities," he intones darkly at one juncture). Director Chan revels in images of butchery and the devastation of flesh (both human and animal), and *Dragon* brings to mind the likes of György Pálfi's grotesque *Taxidermia*



Family matters: Donnie Yen

(2006) and Gaspar Noé's brutal double-header of *Carne* (1991) and *Seul contre tous* (1998), all works that view humanity dimly through the filter of festering corporeality. Jinxi's haunted past (his father fed him his pet horse; he went on to massacre a family of butchers) inspires his moving parallel quest to maintain a new identity and prove himself above the level of the bestial.

Yen brings impressive levels of emotional shading to the sort of role not generally associated with internationally bankable action stars. The inevitable cracking open of his tightly restrained temperament prompts conflict, and the resulting scenes are all the more powerful for emanating from taciturn stillness. The plentiful action scenes are constructed and performed with balletic rigour, though the violence becomes at times so egregious that the film strikes an unintentionally comic register.

Even more impressive is the manner Chan situates the action within a relatable social context, meaning that Jinxi's travails are deeply felt on a community level. The director has an eye for the gently rolling rhythms of idyllic village life (not to mention the fragility of its veneer), the corruption and avarice festering within, and the constant threat from the outside. The result is a pleasingly intimate – if occasionally ridiculous – period action epic. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Jojo Hui Yuet-chun
Peter Ho-sun Chan

Written by
Aubrey Lam

Directors of
Photography

Jake Pollock
Lai Yiu Fai

Editor
Derek Hui

Production
Designed by

Yee Chung Man

Original Score

Chan Kwong Wing

Peter Kam

Chatchai

Pongprapaphan

Sound Design

Nopawat Likitwong

Traithep

Wongpaiboon

Costume Designer

Dora Ng

Action Director

Donnie Yen

©We Pictures Ltd/
Stellar Mega Films Co.

Production
Companies

Yunnan Film Group

presents a We

Pictures Production

We Pictures Limited,

Stellar Mega Films

Limited, Dingsheng

Cultural Industry

Investment Co., Ltd.

JSBC Eudemonia

Blue Ocean TV &

Movie Group Ltd

A Peter Ho-sun

Chan film

Executive Producers

Peter Ho-sun Chan

Qin Hong

Cast

Donnie Yen

Tang Long, 'Liu Jinxi'

Kaneshiro Takeshi

Detective Xu Bai-jiu

Tang Wei

Yu

Jimmy Wang Yu

the Master

Wai Ying Hung

the Master's wife

Jiang Wu

Xu's investigator

Li Xiaoran

Xu's wife

Yin ZhuSheng

Jinsong Wang

Zhou Bo

Dolby Digital

Surround EX

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Subtitles

Distributor

Metrodome

Distribution Ltd

Chinese

theatrical title

Wu xia

China, 1917. Two bandits enter a village and attempt to rob the general store. Liu Jinxi, a local man with a wife and two sons, happens to be in the shop at the time, and kills them, instantly becoming a hero. Investigating detective Xu discovers that one of the victims was on the government's 'most wanted' list. A suspicious Xu becomes convinced that Jinxi is not the ordinary man he seems but in fact a skilled martial artist with mystical powers. Xu discovers that Jinxi is really Tang Long, second-in-command of a group of vicious outlaws known as the 72 Demons, who played a part in the brutal massacre of a butcher's family ten years ago. Xu leaves, but returns to obtain an arrest warrant for Jinxi. Hoping for a reward, the village magistrate informs the Master of the 72 Demons of Long's whereabouts. The offended Master reveals that Long is his son, and kills the magistrate. The Master sends the 72 Demons to find Long. The latter fights them and kills the Master's wife. Xu devises a plan for Long to fake his own death to trick the Demons into leaving, but Long wakes up before they have left. Long severs his left arm in front of the Demons, announcing that he has formally broken ties with them; they tell him that the Master is waiting for him at his house. There, the two men fight. Xu arrives and is killed by the Master. The Master is struck by lightning and dies. Long returns to family life.

A Good Day to Die Hard

USA/Australia 2013
Director: John Moore
Certificate 12A 97m 33s

Reviewed by Kim Newman


Arriving in Moscow, Bruce Willis's series hero John McClane has an odd, non-sequitur conversation with an unbelievable Russian cabbie who lets an American off the fare because the foreigner listens to his (terrible) Frank Sinatra impersonation. This one-scene character incidentally infodumps a key fact about Moscow's traffic system, which gives the mostly clueless McClane a later moment of perception as he realises that a shady lady is lying about how she got to a rendezvous so swiftly. The momentary evocation of Ol' Blue Eyes might be a subtle hark back to the origins of the *Die Hard* series in Roderick Thorp's novel *Nothing Lasts Forever*, a sequel to his *The Detective*, which was filmed in 1968 with Sinatra in the lead (Thorp's hero is called Joe Leland, but is essentially the same McClane).

The *Die Hard* franchise seemed to run its course in a series made at the height of its star's appeal as a box-office action name; in fact, *Die Hard* (1988) turned TV veteran Willis into a first-rank movie star after a run of less successful vehicles. As with the Rocky and Rambo sagas, which similarly rode an 80s zeitgeist, the book seemed closed after climactic 1990s entries: *Die Hard with a Vengeance* (1995) completed the original trilogy by tying up a loose end from the first film as McClane was persecuted and exploited by the brother (Jeremy Irons) of his original nemesis Hans Gruber (Alan Rickman). However, after Sylvester Stallone revived both his signature franchises, moves were made to get an older, craggier, bald McClane back in harness with *Live Free or Die Hard* (aka *Die Hard 4*, 2007). Though that revival was iffy at best, the tank had enough fuel to merit another spin of the sequel wheel, and here we are in Russia, with jokes about Cold War relics and the way old certainties have changed. Scowly



Bruce Willis, Jai Courtney, Sebastian Koch

Willis is forced, like Harrison Ford in *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull* (2008), to let a younger, blander co-lead (Jai Courtney) take on a full share of the running, jumping, hitting, shooting, complaining business.

In the last film, McClane's daughter Lucy (Mary Elizabeth Winstead, returning but even more underused here) was captured and he had to team up with her boyfriend (Justin Long); this time, a full-on father-son estrangement-and-reconciliation sob story winds between the action scenes and spoils the fun. Taking cues from *Die Hard 2* (1990), the new film refuses to come up with a suitable mastermind on the Gruber Brothers pattern and twists the plot a bit as the precise hierarchy of evil amid the stock Russian baddies wavers from scene to scene. It also tones itself down, even before censor trims that fudge the main villain's death, blurring McClane's catchphrase ("yippie-ki-yay motherfucker") with a sound effect, and delivering much devastation but little carnage. Days to Die Hard have been better. 

Good Vibrations


United Kingdom/Ireland 2012
Directors: Lisa Barros D'Sa, Glenn Leyburn
Certificate 15 102m 46s

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

Revealed by the mainstream media yet embraced by disaffected teens, the punk explosion of the late 1970s marshalled its limited chord structures and terrace-chant choruses into a socially unifying force. So goes the theory in this print-the-legend biopic of Belfast's Terri Hooley, whose *Good Vibrations* record shop and indie label showcased the punk outpourings transcending Northern Ireland's sectarian divide. It's certainly possible to argue that the city-centre discotheques which kept their dance floors open had an even greater cross-community impact, but the combination of endearing antihero Hooley and the emergence of an all-time-great pop single from this improbable crucible makes the *Good Vibrations* story worth its big-screen incarnation.

Even by Belfast standards, Hooley is quite a character. Refreshingly unembittered despite losing an eye during a childhood scrap because his dad was a socialist mayoral candidate distrusted by both political tribes, he later prefers to preach the healing power of pop – even if it means spinning reggae discs to an empty bar. Then, his shop's adolescent customers direct him to Belfast's burgeoning punk scene and, in the midst of a seething morass of unkempt local youth, we get a telling epiphany when he twigs what's really going on in his town. It's a fairly conventional way of getting the audience up to speed too, and the rollercoaster trajectory of his ensuing exploits will come as little surprise, even to viewers unfamiliar with the true story. Still, directors Lisa Barros D'Sa and Glenn Leyburn make effective use of TV news archive to convey the mistrust, bloodshed and divisions of the period – though their reconstructed music-scene milieu looks a bit overlit and too clean by comparison – as we skim through a familiar succession of sweaty gigs, rundown vans and management foibles.

Hooley was no flamboyant maverick on the scale of the Tony Wilson seen in Michael Winterbottom's *24 Hour Party People* (2001) and the movie seems smaller in scale as a result, yet his chaotic organisational skills and capricious career priorities stand in infuriating contrast to his boundless musical enthusiasm. Character actor Richard Dormer does well by both extremes in a commanding central turn which galvanises the entire film, turning it into a drama about a man trying to survive his own intractably wilful flaws.

The film manages not to peak too early with the money-shot of The Undertones doing the legendary 'Teenage Kicks' on *Top of the Pops*, though it sidesteps the inconvenient reality that 'Alternative Ulster', Stiff Little Fingers's enduring anthem for Belfast's punk heyday, had little to do with Hooley's good offices (it appears on the soundtrack anyway). Ultimately *Good Vibrations* offers up a nostalgic, slightly contrived, yet no less sincere affirmation of the power of guitars, pogo-ing and unashamed chutzpah to make their mark on the ills of the world. Cheering too that Hooley's relatively unheralded outfits Rudi and The Outcasts get their moment in the spotlight, 

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Alex Young
Written by
Wyck Godfrey
Director of Photography
Skip Woods
Production Designer
Jonathan Sela
Film Editor
Dan Zimmerman
Production Designer
Daniel T. Dorrance
Music
Marco Beltrami
Sound Mixer
Ian Voigt
Costume Designer
Bojana Nikitovic
Visual Effects Supervisor
Everett Burrell
Stunt Co-ordinator
Steve Davison

Limited Liability Company, Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation and TSG Entertainment Finance LLC (in Brazil, Italy, Japan, Korea and Spain)
Production Companies
Twentieth Century Fox presents in association with TSG Entertainment a Giant Pictures production
A John Moore film
Made in association with Big Screen Productions
Executive Producers
Tom Karnowski
Jason Keller
Skip Woods

Cast
Bruce Willis
John McClane
Jai Courtney
Jack McClane
Sebastian Koch
Komarov
Yulia Snigir
Irina

Rasha Bukvic
Alik
Cole Hauser
agent Collins
Amaury Nolasco
Murphy
Sergey Kolesnikov
Chagarin
Mary Elizabeth Winstead
Lucy McClane
Roman Luknár
Anton

Dolby Atmos/ Datasat
In Colour
[L85:1]

Distributor
20th Century Fox International (UK)

8,779 ft +8 frames
IMAX prints
98m 40s
142,080 ft

Moscow, present day. American Jack McClane commits a murder but cuts a deal to testify against oligarch Komarov, who is on trial at the behest of rising defence minister Chagarin; the latter wants to retrieve a file of evidence that could stall his career. New York cop John McClane, Jack's estranged father, travels to Russia but arrives at the courthouse just as Alik, Chagarin's minion, blows it up. John intervenes and prevents Komarov's capture by Alik, but also forestalls CIA extraction of the Russian. John learns that Jack is not a criminal but a CIA agent tasked with preventing Chagarin's rise to power.

Komarov is seemingly betrayed by his daughter Irina and taken to the abandoned city of Chernobyl, where he says the file is hidden. The McClanes travel to Chernobyl to rescue Komarov. Komarov is persuaded by Alik to enter a sealed vault, but this turns out not to contain the imaginary file but a horde of weapons-grade uranium that was hidden away by Komarov and Chagarin when they were in charge of the Soviet nuclear programme. Irina shows true loyalty to her father and murders Alik.

In Moscow, Chagarin is assassinated on Komarov's orders. As Komarov has the uranium loaded on to a helicopter, the McClanes arrive, realise the true situation and set about defeating Komarov's private army and preventing him getting away with the uranium. Komarov and Irina are killed. The McClanes are reconciled.

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probably sounding better now than they did then. Keep your seats during the end credits for the latter's signature number 'Self-Conscious Over You', as a neglected power-pop classic finally gets its due. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Producers
Chris Martin
Andrew Eaton
David Holmes
Bruno Charlesworth
Written by
Colin Carberry
Glenn Paterson
Based on the true stories of Terri Hooley
Director of Photography
Ivan McCullough
Editor
Nick Emerson
Production Designer
Derek Wallace
Music
David Holmes
Keefus Green
Supervising Sound Editor
Nikki Moss
Costume Designer
Maggie Donnelly

@Canderblinks (Vibes) Limited/
Treasure
Entertainment Limited
Production Companies
BBC Films presents with the participation of Bord Scannán na hÉireann/Irish Film Board and Northern Ireland Screen in association with Immaculate Conception Films a Canderblinks Film, Revolution Films and Treasure

Entertainment production
Produced in association with Matador Pictures, Cinema One and Regent Capital
Produced with support provided by the Government of Ireland
Developed with the assistance of Bord Scannán na hÉireann/Irish Film Board, Northern Ireland Screen
Made with the partial assistance of the European Regional Development Fund through Northern Ireland Screen
Executive Producers
Robert Walpole
Rebecca O'Flanagan
Joe Oppenheimer
Nigel Thomas
Gary Lightbody
Jonny Quinn
Nathan Connolly
Stephen Wright
Michael Winterbottom
Lisa Barros D'Sa
Glenn Leyburn

Cast
Richard Dormer
Terri Hooley
Jodie Whittaker
Ruth
Michael Colgan
Dave

Karl Johnson
George
Liam Cunningham
Davy
Adrian Dunbar
Andy
Dylan Moran
Pat
Cathal Maguire
young Terri Hooley
Peter Kelly
Hank Williams

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
The Works UK
Distribution Ltd

9,249 ft +0 frames

Belfast, the mid-1960s. Terri Hooley, the young son of an independent mayoral candidate scorned by unionists and republicans alike, loses an eye when attacked by other children. In the early 1970s, as the worsening Troubles engender a climate of fear which devastates the local nightlife, Terri, now a club DJ, survives a paramilitary assassination attempt, then pays the gunmen off in vinyl albums to protect his new independent record shop, Good Vibrations. The venture stalls initially but Terri finds renewed purpose through the burgeoning underground punk scene, whose defiant DIY aesthetic ignores sectarian boundaries. Soon Hooley is taking bands Rudi and The Outcasts on tour around Northern Ireland, but his most important discovery is Derry's The Undertones, who record 'Teenage Kicks' for his fledgling Good Vibrations record label. Lionised by cult BBC DJ John Peel, the single sends the band into the charts and wins them a slot on primetime TV's 'Top of the Pops'. It's a moment of celebration, but Hooley's disdain for business and his poor organisational skills mean that he hardly benefits from it, nor can he propel his other acts to the same success. His long-suffering wife leaves him, and though he has won the respect of his father, his shop looks doomed until he organises a fundraising Belfast punk showcase at the prestigious Ulster Hall. Crowds pack in for an unforgettable evening, but Hooley's huge guest-list means that he loses money. Over the coming years the shop closes and reopens repeatedly, but Hooley's idealism and his legend remain undimmed.

Hansel & Gretel Witch Hunters

USA/Germany 2012, Director: Tommy Wirkola
Certificate 15 87m 48s

Reviewed by Vadim Rizov

Hansel & Gretel Witch Hunters looks cheaper than its alleged \$50 million budget. After a pre-credits recap of the fairytale, Hansel (Jeremy Renner) and Gretel (Gemma Arterton) are reintroduced as unhealthily co-dependent witch hunters – intervening when Salem-esque trial proceedings threaten innocent women with burning but otherwise merciless in their work. The villain is grand witch Muriel (Famke Janssen), who's been abducting children for a world-threatening coven meeting – a blood moon that only comes once every generation, witch immortality, etc – and who talks in generic, spectacularly lame villainous spurts (while forcing a man to shoot himself: "This place could use a little colour").

Dialogue remains functional, with only a troll named (inexplicably) Edward providing good cheer due to his anachronistic animatronic form (body of ex-Predator Derek Mears, bellowing voice of Robin Atkin Downes) in a poorly rendered CGI world. The cleanly but unexcitingly staged fighting takes place in interchangeable forests, leaving no sequence-specific impression. During their mission, Hansel and Gretel discover that there are not only cackling bad witches but good white ones as well. Hansel's ending voiceover is positively imperialist: "There are good witches out there," he muses, "we know that now." Then, sounding like an American AM-radio call-in crank urging pre-emptive death to the Muslim world, he vows to hunt down any hiding baddies. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Will Ferrell
Adam McKay
Kevin Messick
Beau Flynn
Written by
Tommy Wirkola
Director of Photography
Michael Bonvillian
Edited by
Jim Page
Production Designer
Stephen Scott
Music
Atli Örvarsson
Sound Mixer
Mac Ruth
Costume Designer
Marlene Stewart

@Paramount
Pictures Corporation
and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures Inc.
Production Companies
Paramount Pictures
and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Pictures
present a Gary Sanchez production

A Siebzehnte
Babelsberg Film
co-production
With the support
of Deutscher
Filmförderfonds
Executive Producers
Denis L. Stewart
Chris Henchy
Tripp Vinson

Cast
Jeremy Renner
Hansel
Gemma Arterton
Gretel
Famke Janssen
Muriel
Peter Stormare
Sheriff Berringer
Thomas Mann
Ben
Derek Mears
Edward the troll
Pihla Viitala
Mina
Ingrid Bolsø Berdal
horned witch
Joanna Kulig
red-haired witch
Robin Atkin Downes

voice of Edward
Björn Sundquist
Jackson
Rainer Bock
Mayor Engleman
Thomas Scharff
Hansel and
Gretel's father
Kathrin Kühnel
Adrianna, Hansel
and Gretel's mother

Dolby Digital/
Datasat/SDSS
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Some screenings
presented in 3D

Distributor
Paramount
Pictures UK

7,902 ft +0 frames

Young siblings Hansel and Gretel are abandoned by their father in a forest in Germany. Drawn into a house made of candy, they're captured by a witch but manage to kill her. Years later, brother and sister are mercenary witch hunters. Invited to Augsburg, where children are being kidnapped in unusual numbers, they discover that powerful witch Muriel is abducting the children for a ritual sacrifice that will make witches immortal. After many fights they rescue the children and defeat Muriel and the evil witches.

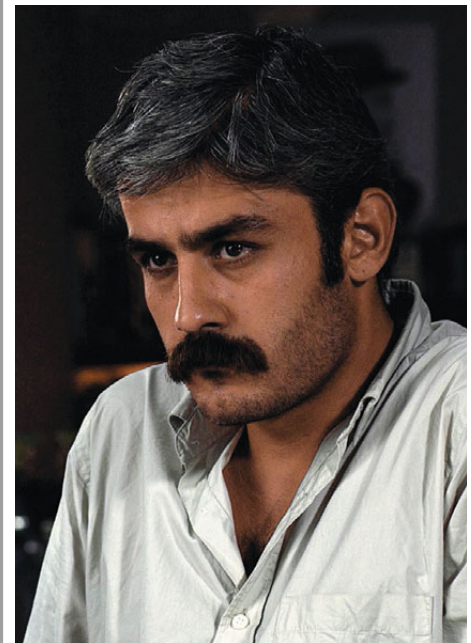
Home (Yurt)

Turkey 2011
Director: Muzaffer Ozdemir

Reviewed by Trevor Johnston

Before this directorial debut, Muzaffer Ozdemir was known primarily as a key performer in his fellow countryman Nuri Bilge Ceylan's early films. Though never a professional actor, he shared the top prize in Cannes with the late Mehmet Emin Toprak for Ceylan's *Uzak* (2003), which confirmed its maker's arrival on the international stage. By then, Ozdemir had played key roles in three of Ceylan's features, but it's the second of those – 2000's *Clouds of May* – which appears to cast the longest shadow over Ozdemir's own filmmaking bow. Where Ceylan's offering followed an independent filmmaker from Istanbul heading back to his home village and eventually casting family and friends in a micro-budget production, Ozdemir's *Home* involves an architect trying to cope with depression by visiting his home village and taking photographs of the area. There's a certain overlap in subject-matter, then, and although the earlier film is of a different order of thematic and formal accomplishment, Ozdemir's unforced – perhaps even unschooled – sincerity registers firmly in its own way.

He does, however, struggle to extract drama from his scenario. The psychological sufferings of gloomy protagonist Dogan are somewhat ill-defined, and hence it's hard to care that much about his prospects for recovery on his return to the community where he grew up. There's no tantalising mystery about his venture either, as there is in Abbas Kiarostami's *The Wind Will Carry Us* (1999), for instance, where a similar city/country tension is laid out – here the situation's merely sketchy. Work colleagues, family and locals fill in expository gaps, but it's soon obvious that Ozdemir's main interest is the place rather than the people. Gümüşhane is a rugged area near the Black Sea coast, whose myriad mountain streams are in the process of being tamed for hydroelectric schemes, prompting a payday for the authorities selling on the rights. As the film devolves into a tour of



Grand designs: Kanbolat Görkem Arslan

Identity Thief

USA/Japan 2013

Director: Seth Gordon

Certificate 15 111m 23s

the region, Ozdemir pencils in the demographic, religious and cultural changes at play: the former Greek populace have long since been moved on; the modern imam is rather more worldly than his predecessors; and internal security officers wary of terrorist threat conduct passport checks on strangers (Dogan counts as one, even though he's a native). The presence of an eco-friendly fish farm shows that time need not stand still – and indeed the laptop-carrying visitor is grateful for online access to continue his research – but Dogan can't share his brother-in-law's fatalism about the unstoppable effect of development.

Ultimately, the film's evident anger never really funnels into dramatic intensity but the modest running time does culminate in an image that speaks eloquently for itself: an expansive mountain vista bears the scar of an open-cast goldmine, playing against the otherwise seemingly discrete opening sequence of a bell which outlives the dead sheep that used to wear it. The manmade endures, for better or worse, and Ozdemir, though at this stage far from a skilled filmmaker, has said what he came to say. Ⓢ

Credits and Synopsis

Written by
Muzaffer Ozdemir
Director of Photography
Ilker Berke
Editing
Ayhan Ergürel
Muzaffer Ozdemir
Selda Taskin
Derya Baser
Art Director
Serpil Ozdemir
Sound Recording
Ismail Karadas

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Production Companies
Tutya Film
with the contribution of Republic of

Turkey, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Directorate General of Copyrights and Cinema
Executive Producer
Sadik Incesu

Cast
Kanbolat
Gökrem Arslan
Dogan
Pinar Ünsal
Tülay
Ismail Ergün
Ismail
Coskun Çetinalp
Mukhtar
Muzaffer Özdemir
Muhammet Uzuner
Saygin Soysal

Ilhami Sibil
Halil Kilic
Kerim Olgun
Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Verve Pictures
Turkish theatrical title
Yurt

The Turkish countryside. A man finds a dead sheep surrounded by buzzing flies; he takes the bell from the sheep's neck and washes it in a nearby stream. Elsewhere, middle-aged architect Dogan is shaken by disorienting feelings while walking in the mountains. Back in Istanbul, he confers with an older work colleague, who's supportive of his plan to clear his head by spending some time in his rural childhood home, and suggests that he might take photographs documenting the area while he's there. Dogan drives to Gümüşhane near the Black Sea coast, and learns that the new imam is now living in his old family home. He stays with his sister Tülay and carries out online research into the extent to which hydroelectric schemes have blighted nearly all the mountain streams in the region. His brother-in-law suggests that he can't fight change, but Dogan is appalled. He spends time with the more environmentally aware Ismail, who runs a fish farm in the mountains. Later, while out walking, he evades the attentions of two strangers who want to know where he's from. Subsequently, he takes a photograph of a spectacular waterfall, but reports back to the office that any book of pictures would be out of date before publication, since there are plans to dam this stream too. Back at Ismail's place, village elder Mukhtar insists on Dogan giving up his passport for inspection by two police intelligence officers. Even though Dogan spent his childhood in the area, he no longer feels that he belongs.



Odd couple: Jason Bateman, Melissa McCarthy

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

This isn't exactly proselytising, but *Identity Thief* is a fractionally better movie than Rotten Tomatoes would have you believe. It takes two legit comic talents – Jason Bateman and Melissa McCarthy – and pegs them into the reliable odd-couple action-comedy road-trip template: think *Silver Streak* (1976) or *Planes, Trains and Automobiles* (1987). While not the equal of those or quite a few other precedents, *Identity Thief* does offer a playing field to Bateman, who gives each moment of exasperated forbearance the detail of a Dürer woodcut, and to McCarthy, his foil, playing a feckless,

low-born creature of pure animal appetite.

The poster for *Identity Thief* reads "From the director of *Horrible Bosses*", as if that was some kind of brag. As in that film, Seth Gordon, directing from Craig Mazin's script, evokes current social reality – economic malaise, job insecurity, class conflict – only to hastily sweep everything under the rug before the credits roll, shuffling his characters through loophole resolutions. The journey is more enjoyable than the destination thanks to a number of sharp supporting acts along the way, including Ben Falcone as a glum motel clerk and Eric Stonestreet as a horny honky-tonker. Ⓢ

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Scott Stuber
Jason Bateman
Pamela Abdy
Screenplay
Craig Mazin
Story
Jerry Eeten
Craig Mazin
Director of Photography
Javier Aguirresarobe
Edited by
Peter Teschner
Production Designer
Shepherd Frankel

Music
Christopher YOUNG
Production Sound Mixer
Whit Norris
Costume Designer
Carol Ramsey
©Universal Studios
Production Companies
Universal Pictures
presents in association with
Relativity Media a
Bluegrass Films/

Aggregate Films
Production
A film by Seth Gordon
Presented in association with
Dentsu Inc./Fuji Television
Network, Inc.
Completed with assistance from the Georgia Film, Music & Digital Entertainment Office
Executive Producers
Peter Morgan
Dan Kolsrud

Cast
Jason Bateman
Sandy Bigelow
Patterson
Melissa McCarthy
Diana
Jon Favreau
Harold Cornish
Amanda Peet
Trish Patterson
Tip 'T.I.' Harris
Julian
Genesis Rodriguez
Marisol
Morris Chestnut
Detective Reilly

John Cho
Daniel Casey
Robert Patrick
skiptracer
Eric Stonestreet
Big Chuck
Jonathan Banks
Paul
Ben Falcone
Tony

Dolby Digital/ Datasat/SDDS
Colour by
DeLuxe
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Universal Pictures
International
UK & Eire

10,024 ft +8 frames

Denver, the present. Accountant Sandy Patterson discovers that his identity has been stolen and his credit rating ruined by a woman in Florida. He decides to bring the culprit back to Denver himself, vigilante-style. He locates the woman, Diana, a career criminal. After a struggle they hit the road

together, pursued by bounty hunters and some of Diana's old associates. Along the way they begin to bond, and when they reach their destination Sandy can't bring himself to turn Diana in; she goes to the police voluntarily. The two remain close as she studies for a new life while in the penitentiary.

In the House

France 2012
Director: François Ozon

Reviewed by Ginette Vincendeau

See Feature
on page 32

François Ozon's 13th feature film *In the House* is another successful addition to the director's prodigious output, confirming his exceptional place in contemporary French cinema; the film did well at the French box office and has garnered many prizes, with probably more on the way. Whether one sees Ozon's work as popular auteur cinema or sophisticated entertainment, the new film, like others before, operates on a fine edge between social satire, queer desire and self-reflexivity, the territory he has been carving out over the past 15 years or so. Less star-studded and less broad in its social farce than 2010's *Potiche*, the new film, also based on a play, echoes the earlier one in conveying humorously the malaise of the bourgeois family while sustaining an uncanny atmosphere.

Fabrice Luchini, who played the boorish husband of *Potiche*, here embodies Germain, a disillusioned middle-aged literature teacher at a lycée who starts the new academic year with a heavy heart, ranting against falling standards and rampant bureaucracy. However, his spirits are lifted by the arrival of a brilliant and handsome 16-year-old pupil, Claude (Ernst Umhauer). A seemingly innocent assignment ("Write about what you did last weekend") triggers off a set of events through which the newcomer will disturb the lives around him: Germain, his wife Jeanne, played by Kristin Scott Thomas, his schoolfriend Rapha and the latter's father (also called Rapha, played by Denis Ménochet) and depressed mother Esther (Emmanuelle Seigner). While delivering increasingly lurid accounts of the banal life in Rapha's house in weekly instalments, the manipulative Claude manages to upset all three men and seduce both women. As Ozon has said, Claude "contaminates everything, as in [Pasolini's] *Theorem*". But if his sexual desire is directed at Esther and Jeanne, his greatest power of seduction – intellectual rather than sexual – resides in his hold over Germain, strong enough to land the teacher in a mental asylum and sustain the whole narrative. So that Claude can continue to write his voyeuristic stories, Germain devises ploys such as giving him free lessons and stealing maths exam papers. The film makes storytelling its main structuring device as Germain pointedly invokes Scheherazade in his advice to Claude to sustain audience interest: "What is going to happen?" Another apparently innocuous assignment set by Germain, an essay on "my best friend", provokes the final set of dramatic events whereby Germain and Jeanne's lives unravel: Germain's closeness to Claude makes his colleagues suspicious; he humiliates Rapha in class, provoking the fury of Rapha's father; the stealing of the maths papers is uncovered. As a result, Germain loses his job, Jeanne leaves him and the end of the film sees him in a mental hospital, visited by Claude.

The other point of convergence between literary narration and the plot of *In the House* is contained in a question Germain puts to Claude: "Parody or realism?" The film's stand on this point is deliberately obscure as it veers between naturalistic scenes in classic French style, such



Stranger than fiction: Ernst Umhauer, Emmanuelle Seigner, Fabrice Luchini

as those in the school or in Germain and Jeanne's house, and a no man's land of houses straight from *Desperate Housewives*. Directorial input is clear, however, when Claude writes of Esther that she exudes "the oh so singular smell of middle-class women" – hardly the phrase of a 16-year-old. Similarly Jeanne's avant-garde art gallery is more parody than realism. Yet it is the inability, or lack of inclination, to distinguish between the two levels that makes *In the House* complex and fascinating – as in the scenes where Germain, reading Claude's prose, materialises in Rapha's house, invisible to the other characters.

In the House is not above class snobbery and casual misogyny, for example in the interests it assigns to its characters – to Germain and Claude, the genius of Flaubert and other great writers; to Jeanne art that is as obscene as it is pretentious; to Esther home-decorating magazines. Rapha and his father gormlessly watch sport on television, eating pizza. Claude watches football with them but with the

ironic distance of the narrator, and the house of a lower-middle-class family is viewed with condescension. We shouldn't forget that this is a house of fiction (the title is a clear tribute to Henry James), and Germain and Claude adeptly convey the pleasures of orchestrating narrative construction and suspense. They are helped by superb performances. Scott Thomas is perfect as the brittle Jeanne, as is Seigner as the sleepy Esther. But Luchini and Umhauer take centre stage: Luchini deploys his droll persona while toning down his usual histrionics; newcomer Umhauer is a brilliantly opaque Claude.

As in Ozon's *8 Women* (2002) and *Potiche*, the cleverness of the narrative game often threatens to overwhelm – these are games of the mind rather than the heart. Yet as Germain and Claude lose everything, they acquire an emotional depth, even as they decide to stay in the metaphorical house of fiction. As Ozon puts it, "They chose fiction over reality. That is where they feel alive." 📺

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Eric Altmayer
Nicolas Altmayer
Screenplay
François Ozon
Freely adapted from
the play *El chico de la última fila* [The boy in the back row]
by Juan Mayorga
Director of Photography
Jérôme Almeras
Editor
Laure Gardette

Art Director
Arnaud de Moleron
Music
Philippe Rombi
Sound
Brigitte Taillandier
Benoît Gargonnie
Jean-Paul Hurier
Costume Designer
Pascaline Chavanne

©Mandarin Cinéma
- Mars Films - France
2 Cinéma - Foz
Production Companies

Mandarin Cinéma
presents
In co-production with
Mandarin Cinéma,
Mars Films, France
2 Cinéma, Foz
With the participation
of Canal+, Ciné+,
France Télévisions
In association with
SOFICA, Banque
Postale Image
5, Cofimage 23,
Palatine Étoile 9
With the support of
Région Île-de-France

in partnership
with CNC

Cast
Fabrice Luchini
Germain
Kristin Scott Thomas
Jeanne
Emmanuelle Seigner
Esther
Denis Ménochet
Rapha Sr
Ernst Umhauer
Claude

Bastien Ughetto
Rapha Jr
Jean-François Balmer
headmaster
Yolande Moreau
the twins
Catherine Davenier
Anouk
Vincent Schmitt
Bernard
Jacques Bosc
Claude's father

Dolby Digital
In Colour

[1.85:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Momentum Pictures

French theatrical title
Dans la maison

A French town, the present. Germain, a middle-aged literature teacher at a lycée, strikes up a relationship with Claude, a gifted 16-year-old pupil who gives him a piece of writing every week in which he explores the home of his classmate Rapha. Claude's deadpan accounts of Rapha's lower-middle-class family (his mother Esther and his father Rapha) in turn shock and delight Germain and his wife Jeanne (who runs a modern art gallery). Germain's growing fascination with Claude leads him to give him private lessons during

which they discuss literature while following Claude's increasingly intimate account of his times in Rapha's house, including his seduction of Esther. Germain's position at school is increasingly threatened as colleagues become suspicious of his relationship with Claude, especially after he publicly humiliates Rapha in front of the class. His relationship with Jeanne is strained. Claude seduces Jeanne, just as Germain loses his job. Rapha and his family leave the area. Germain has a breakdown; Claude visits him at the clinic.

John Dies at the End

USA 2012

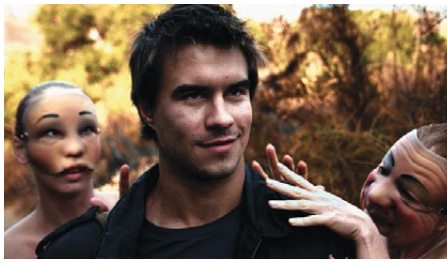
Director: Don Coscarelli

Reviewed by Vadim Rizov

Bad cult films are so smugly assured of instant fandom that genuine oddity and invention are generally low, leaving only predictable cues for gobsmacked hooting. Don Coscarelli's *John Dies at the End* is a prime example, a film whose convolutions and wackiness exist solely to delight people who enjoy anything-goes plotting with no end game, internal logic or larger goal. The plot defies quick or clear description, and it takes two thirds of the film to learn what the basic stakes – plot, villain, desired happy resolution et al – actually are. Once finally unveiled, the plot is staggeringly conventional stuff, hardly worth all the fuss and bother: a threat like none (or too many) the galaxy's ever seen before, unlikely schmuck heroes, and so on.

Invention isn't decisively necessary for sharply executed genre fare, but at its most creative *John Dies at the End* still feels small and shabby. The heroes are David Wong (Chase Williamson) and John Cheese (Rob Mayes), twentysomething men whose smirking self-satisfaction and bro-ish implacability inspire instant, Ashton Kutcher-level loathing. Two years before the narrative framework begins, David and John encounter a Rastafarian calling himself Robert Marley (Tai Bennett), who lays an injectable black drug dubbed "Soy Sauce" on John. The convoluted subsequent fallout revolves around the drug's twin properties: a sort of inciter for psychic abilities for David and John, but for most who take it a deadly killer, replacing them with unspecified alien spawn working on behalf of Korrok, a massive robot brain from an alternate universe.


Early on, David and John confront a beast from another dimension, which builds itself from a pile of frozen meat that leaps out of a fridge to take Svankmajer-ian shape. It's automatic fanboy awesomeness: meat assuming demented/revolted form via handcrafted effects rather than bloodless CGI – and yet the scene's got no snap or vigour to it. As soon as the fridge is opened, there's no choice for the meat but to assemble into warrior mode, and even such



The joy of soy: Rob Mayes

predictable invention comes in an otherwise tedious scene, in which the boys try to escape from the room but are foiled when its doorknob turns into a penis, something they can't bring themselves to wrench for escape. There's something depressingly regressive about a film whose protagonists fear nothing more than contact with a phallus (or having an immensely powerful creature taunt them by noting that "your wieners are even smaller in person").

Part of the blame for the one-thing-after-another narrative wheel-spinning – great complications leading to underwhelming truths – can probably be attributed to the source material, which began as an internet novel by Jason Pargin. The need to keep reader interest through newer and ever more complex elements doesn't transfer, and the film lacks the kinky perversity of recent near-comparable films such as Gregg Araki's *Kaboom*. The reference points are similarly by-the-numbers, as when a zombified husk takes David, John and friends to a mall of the dead.

Visibly made on the cheap, *John Dies at the End* invites viewer congratulations for ploughing through budgetary constraints with plot twists and sheer violent gusto. Arms are pulled off and try to strangle our heroes, while Korrok is a nuclear-reactor-sized insectoid/amoeba-shaped monstrosity, all mucus-dripping mouths, glowing yellow eyes and disgusting sound effects. At the end, a variant of the killer silver sphere from Coscarelli's beloved *Phantasm* series appears as the final self-satisfied gesture. 

A Late Quartet


USA 2012

Director: Yaron Zilberman

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

Beethoven's Opus 131, longest and most complex of his string quartets, is also the hardest to play; it's in seven movements, linked *attacca* (that is, to be played without a break) and lasts some 45 minutes. This, as cellist Peter (Christopher Walken) tells his class at the outset of *A Late Quartet*, means that the players will inevitably get out of tune before the end, as they have no chance to retune their instruments. It's an obvious metaphor for the plot, in which the four members of a famous quartet, having played together for 25 years, become increasingly at odds with each other as petty jealousies and ego clashes come to destroy the harmony that existed between them. "What are we supposed to do?" Peter asks. "Stop? Or struggle to continuously adjust to each other... even if we are out of tune?"

Classical music is sometimes seen as austere and emotionally arid – especially string quartets, perhaps the purest and most intellectual of all classical forms. It's an impression that first-time feature director Yaron Zilberman and his co-screenwriter Seth Grossman are determined to counteract, showing us the passion and turbulence both in the music and in those who play it. A little too determined, perhaps: their film is too often betrayed by a weakness for multiple emotional pile-ups that collapse into melodramatic cliché, not helped by dialogue that rarely evades the banal. "I did the best I could," protests Juliette, the quartet's viola player (Catherine Keener), when her daughter (Imogen Poots) accuses her of having neglected her. "I tried to be a good mother to you."

Juliette is, or should be, the film's emotional centre – married to second violin Robert (Philip Seymour Hoffman), sometime lover of first violin Daniel (Mark Ivanir) and Peter's foster daughter. Even so, she remains opaque; compared to her three male colleagues, we learn far less of what motivates her either as a person or a musician. "Do you really love me – or am I just convenient?" demands Robert; but we never find out any more than he does. Though Keener makes the most of what she's got, she's edged out of frame by the three men. Hoffman as Robert, tired of playing (literally) second fiddle to the control-freakish Daniel, is excellent as ever even if hardly stretched, and the Ukraine-born Ivanir gratefully grabs the chance of playing something subtler than 'Russian Heavy #2'. Acting honours, though, go 



Second fiddle: Philip Seymour Hoffman

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Brad Baruh
Don Coscarelli
Andy Meyers
Roman Perez
Written for the screen by
Don Coscarelli
Based on the story by David Wong [i.e. Jason Pargin]
Director of Photography
Michael Gioulakis

Editing

Donald Milne
Don Coscarelli
Production Designer
Todd Jeffery
Music Composed by
Brian Tyler
Sound Mixer
Dana Ferguson
Costume Design
Shelley Kay

©Green River
Sales, Inc.

Production Companies

A Silver Sphere
presentation in
association with
M3 Creative and
Touchy Feely Films
Executive Producers
Paul Giamatti
Daniel Carey
Dac Coscarelli

Dac Coscarelli

Cast

Chase Williamson
David Wong, 'Dave'
Rob Mayes
John Cheese
Clancy Brown
Dr Albert Marconi
Glynn Turman
Detective Appleton
Doug Jones
Roger North
Daniel Roebuck
Largeman

Fabianne Therese

Amy
Jonny Weston
Justin White
Allison Weissman
Shelly
Jimmy Wong
Fred Chu
Tai Bennett
Robert Marley
Ethan Erickson
Sergeant McElroy
Pranidhi Varshney
Deepti Chakrabarti

Paul Giamatti

Arnie Blondestone

In Colour
[1.78:1]

Distributor
Revolver
Entertainment

Illinois, the present. Spiritual warrior David Wong meets reporter Arnie Blondestone. David explains that two years ago he met a Rastafarian at a party who gave best friend John Cheese a mysterious drug called 'Soy Sauce'. The drug gave John psychic visions and the ability to place phone calls from the future. David is accidentally injected with the drug. As police detective Appleton investigates, it is revealed that Soy Sauce gives some people psychic abilities, but for most it results in takeover

by an alien entity. With the help of psychic Albert Marconi, David and John transport to an alternative universe ruled by Korrok, a sentient organic robot that plans to take over our dimension. David and John detonate a massive hallucinogen but don't know if they have destroyed Korrok.

David realises that Arnie is a figment of his imagination. Later, David and John visit an alternate universe but decline to help its citizens in their fight against evil.

to Walken, portraying the Parkinson's-stricken cellist with great dignity, and reminding us what a fine actor he can be.

For all its weaknesses, *A Late Quartet* represents a rare attempt to deal intelligently with classical music in mainstream cinema. Of course there's Beethoven's sublime music to carry it (courtesy of the Brentano Quartet, though the actors do an impressive miming job). At one point Peter recounts (in an anecdote borrowed from Gregor Piatigorsky's memoirs) how as a tyro cellist he played for the great Casals who, ignoring his blatant faults, praised him lavishly. Years later, meeting Casals again, he asked him why. "Leave that to the morons," responded the maestro, "who judge by counting faults. I can be grateful and so must you be for one singular phrase." It's not a bad principle. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

Vanessa Coifman
David Faigenblum
Emanuel Michael
Mandy Tagger
Brookkey

Produced by

Tamar Sela
Yaron Zilberman
Screenplay
Yaron Zilberman
Seth Grossman

Story

Yaron Zilberman
Director of Photography
Frederick Elmes

Editor

Yuval Shar

Production Designer

John Kasarda

Music

Angelo Badalamenti

Sound Designer

Robert Hein

Costume Designer

Joseph G. Aulisi

©A Late Quartet LLC

Production Companies

RKO Pictures

presents an Opening
Night production
in association
with Concept
Entertainment,
Spring Pictures,
Unison Films

Filmed with the

support of the
New York State
Governor's Office
for Motion Picture
& Television
Development

A film by Yaron

Zilberman

Executive

Producers

Adi Ezroni

Ted Hartley

Peter Pastorelli

Cassandra

Kulukundis

Cast

Philip Seymour

Hoffman

Robert Gelbart

Mark Ivanir

Daniel Lerner

Catherine Keener

Juliette Gelbart

Imogen Poots

Alexandra Gelbart

Christopher Walken

Peter Mitchell

Liraz Charhi

Pilar

Madhur Jaffrey

Dr Nadir

Anne Sofie

von Otter

Miriam Mitchell

Wallace Shawn

Gideon Rosen

Nina Lee

Nina Lee

Dolby Digital

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Distributor

Artificial Eye

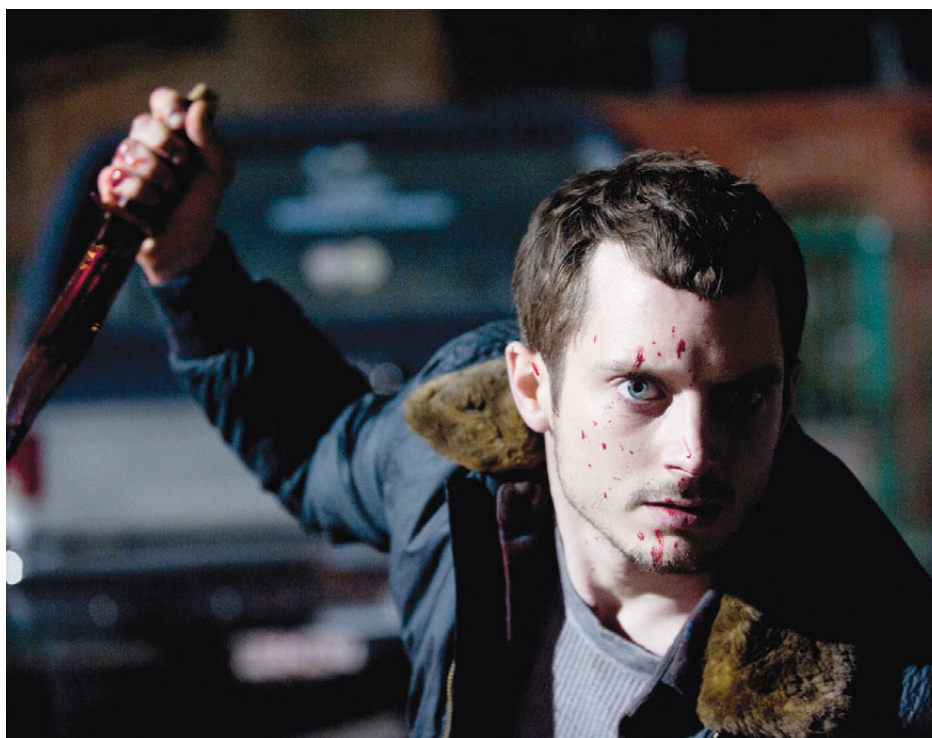
Film Company

Maniac

France/USA 2012

Director: Franck Khalfoun

Certificate 18 88m 59s



Mannequin murders: Elijah Wood

Reviewed by Anton Bitel

"You are totally not what I imagined," says Lucie (Megan Duffy), the young date whom Frank has picked up on a website called Cupid's Rejects. She had been expecting somebody "fat, with long dark hair and greasy skin full of acne" – in other words, somebody just like Joe Spinell's sweaty, corpulent protagonist from the original *Maniac*. William Lustig's 1980 film blended the mother-loving murder of *Psycho*, the gutter-level New York madness of *Taxi Driver* (in which Spinell had played a small role) and aspects of recent real serial killers such as 'Son of Sam' and John Wayne Gacy, to create a lurid slasher

whose gory sensationalism and exploitative sleaziness were offset and uneasily elevated by the intensity of Spinell's performance. *Maniac* was as schizophrenic as its titular antihero, and unlike Sean S. Cunningham's *Friday the 13th* (released in the same year), it had in Spinell's Frank a real, complex character to ground all the slice and dice.

That was then – but in Franck (P2) Khalfoun's remake, transposed from the Big Apple's long-gone mean streets to post-millennial Downtown LA, Frank too has changed, now played by the much younger, slither, angel-faced Elijah Wood, merging his fantasy persona as conflicted

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Alexandre Aja
Thomas Langmann
William Lustig

Screenplay

Alexandre Aja
Grégory Levasseur

Based on the motion picture *Maniac* [1980]

by William Lustig

Director of Photography

Maxime Alexandre

Edited by

Baxter
Production Design
Stefania Cella

Music

Rob

Sound

Zsolt Magyar
Emmanuel Augéard

François-Joseph Hors

Costume Design

Mairi Chisholm

©La Petite Reine/

Studio 37

Production Companies

Thomas Langmann

and Alexandre Aja

present a La Petite

Reine and Studio

37 co-production

With the participation

of Canal+ & Ciné+

In association with

Blue Underground

A film by Franck

Khalfoun

Executive Producers

Alix Taylor
Pavlina Hatoupis

Antoine de Cazotte

Daniel Delume

Andrew W. Garroni

Cast

Elijah Wood

Frank Zito

Nora Arnezeder

Anna

Genevieve Alexandra

Jessica

Jan Broberg

Rita

Megan Duffy

Lucie 86

Liane Balaban

Judy

Joshua De La Garza

Martin

America Olivo

Angela, Frank's

mother

Sammi Rotibi

Jason

In Colour

[2.35:1]

Distributor

Metrodome

Distribution Ltd

8,008 ft +8 frames

Present-day New York. The Fugue Quartet, a long-established classical string quartet, comprises Daniel Lerner (first violin), Robert Gelbart (second violin), Robert's wife Juliette (viola) and Peter Mitchell (cello). Peter, the oldest member by some years and still mourning his late wife, consults his doctor, who diagnoses Parkinson's. Breaking the news to his colleagues, Peter suggests that their forthcoming performance of Beethoven's Quartet in C sharp minor (Op. 131) should be his farewell concert, and that they should find a new cellist.

Long-suppressed tensions start to erupt. Robert proposes that he and Daniel should alternate first and second violin parts, but neither Daniel nor Juliette agrees. Hurt by his wife's lack of support, Robert has a one-night stand with flamenco dancer Pilar. Juliette, discovering this, tells him to leave. Daniel, who's been teaching Robert and Juliette's daughter Alexandra, begins an affair with her. Peter asks Gideon, leader of a piano trio, to let his cellist Nina take over in the Fugue Quartet. Juliette finds out about Daniel and Alexandra; mother and daughter have a furious row. When Robert finds out during a rehearsal, he attacks Daniel. Alexandra breaks off the affair.

During the concert, Peter stops playing and announces his departure to the audience. Nina takes over for the final movement. The other three members of the quartet are reconciled.

Downtown LA, the present. Loner Frank Zito restores antique mannequins in an inherited workshop – and also hunts and murders women at night, nailing their scalps to his mannequins in an attempt to recreate and transcend his fraught relationship with long-dead mother Angela. When conceptual photographer Anna admires the mannequins, Frank feels that he has found his 'perfect fit'. Anna, however, already has a boyfriend, musician Jason. Humiliated by Jason at the opening of Anna's latest exhibition – which incorporates several of Frank's mannequins with Anna's face superimposed – Frank stalks older gallery owner Rita to her apartment

and, insisting she is his mother, scalps her.

Comforting Anna over Rita's death, Frank arouses her suspicions with some careless words. Frank murders Anna's neighbour Martin and bundles unconscious Anna into his van, hoping to introduce her to his 'mother' back home. Anna stabs Frank and flees to a passing car. The car hits Frank before crashing. Traumatized, Frank scalps the dying Anna and, back in the workshop, refashions her as his bride. Frank's other mannequin 'women' tears him limb from limb and peels off his face, revealing a mannequin underneath. Police find Frank's corpse, surrounded by dummies.

Movie 43

Directors: various
Certificate 15 90m 0s

innocent Frodo in *The Lord of the Rings* films (even brandishing a ring in the final sequence) with his cold-blooded killer from *Sin City*. Like his namesake director, Frank is here engaged in the art of the remake – for not only is he attempting, through the medium of artificial mannequins and real scalps, to restage his troubled past with a neglectful, meretricious mother (America Olivo), but he is also (unlike Spinell's Frank) a professional restorer of antiques “from all styles and eras”, while seeming himself as being, as his love interest Anna (Nora Arnezeder) points out, “from another era”.

Frank is not alone in his retro qualities – for his doomed internet date Lucie, despite her hipster tattoos and thoroughly modern attitude to sex, puts on a vinyl (!) copy of Q Lazzarus's 1988 song ‘Goodbye Horses’ (the song to which psycho-killer Buffalo Bill danced in *The Silence of the Lambs*) as mood music in her apartment filled with vintage synths – while the film's own score (by Rob) is a nostalgic pastiche of 80s electronica à la John Carpenter, Goblin and Giorgio Moroder. Anna, who expressly compares Frank to Dr Frankenstein (and will herself become his refashioned bride), is an avowed fan of ‘old films’, inviting Frank out on a date to see *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (considered, she observes, “to be the first horror movie”). Robert Wiene's nightmarish psychodrama is an obvious reflex for Frank's own experiences, and indeed all that Frank sees on the screen is a hallucinatory montage of his own traumatic memories and deviant fantasies – in a film very much preoccupied with projections both photographic and psychological. For just as artist Anna superimposes images of her own face on Frank's old mannequins (“I try to bring them to life with light”), Frank does something similar with blood-matted hair and staple gun. No wonder Anna and Frank seem such a ‘perfect fit’, as her art and his murders express a similar renovation of the past in the image of the present.

Having already revisited the men's-toilet sequence from the original *Maniac* in their 2003 feature debut *Switchblade Romance*, writer/producers Alexandre Aja and Grégory Levasseur (who were also behind remakes *The Hills Have Eyes* and *Mirrors*) have here thoroughly rewritten the grammar of Lustig's film, showing not just the occasional scene but practically everything (real and/or imagined) from Frank's point of view, so that his face is only ever glimpsed in reflections, photographs or the odd ‘objective’ shot (in fact Frank's own deluded or ecstatic visions of himself). This forces an uncomfortably close identification between viewer and voyeuristic killer, making us prisoners of Frank's compulsive mindset as much as he is. Maxime Alexandre's queasily psychogenic camerawork produces something more akin to *Enter the Void* than *Lady in the Lake*, offering a predatory perspective on a contemporary world haunted by the melancholy and madness of a mummified past. It is a tawdry, troubling tragedy, unlikely to be embraced by anyone besides hardened horror fans – but in a genre so often filled with dummies, *Maniac* is surprisingly smart, delivering something very different (visceral brutality aside) from what you might imagine. Ⓢ



Skitzophrenia: Terence Howard

Reviewed by Kim Newman

This ramshackle gross-out sketch comedy sells itself as having the biggest name cast ever assembled, though it's fairly low-wattage when set beside cameo-studded efforts like *Thank Your Lucky Stars* or *Around the World in 80 Days* from the heyday of Hollywood (tellingly, not a fondly remembered genre) and gives its walk-on players less to chew on even than its obvious antecedents, *Kentucky Fried Movie* and *Amazon Women on the Moon*.

Two of the film's segments are about blind dates (as was a sketch in *Amazon Women* that starred Griffin Dunne, who directs a skit here) and go on well beyond the point of embarrassment with jokes about prosthetics

(testicles under Hugh Jackman's chin, plastic-surgery grotesquerie inflicted on Stephen Merchant and Halle Berry during a game of Truth or Dare). A few set-ups are promising – Chloë Grace Moretz in a sketch about how menstruation freaks out useless men, Terrence Howard in a parody of underdog sports movies – but hammered into the ground in the execution. Others – Johnny Knoxville and Seann William Scott torturing leprechauns played by Gerard Butler, Richard Gere failing to see trouble with a life-size MP3 player that looks like a naked woman but has a fan inside the vagina – are agony to endure. Mostly, sketch-comedy features are hit-or-miss, but this is miss-or-miss-by-a-mile. Ⓢ

Credits and Synopsis

Directed by

Steven Brill
Peter Farrelly
Will Graham
Steve Carr
Griffin Dunne
James Duffy
Jonathan Van Tulleken
Elizabeth Banks
Patrik Forsberg
Brett Ratner
Rusty Cundieff
James Gunn
Produced by
Charles B. Wessler
John Penotti
Peter Farrelly
Ryan Kavanaugh

Writers

Will Carlough
Tobias Carlson
Jacob Fleisher
Patrik Forsberg
Will Graham
James Gunn
Claes Kijellström
Jack Kukoda
Bill O'Malley
Matthew Portenoy
Greg Pritkin
Rocky Russo
Olle Sarri
Elizabeth Shapiro
Jeremy Sosenko
Jonathan Van Tulleken
Jonas Wittenmark

Production Companies

Relativity Media
presents in
association with
Virgin Produced a
Relativity Media,
Greenstreet Films,
Charles B. Wessler
Entertainment
production
Executive Producers
Tim Williams
Tucker Tooley
Ron Burkle
Jason Beckman
Jason Colodne
Jason Felts

Cast

Hugh Jackman
Davis
Kate Winslet
Beth
Liev Schreiber
Robert
Naomi Watts
Samantha
Anna Faris
Vanessa
Emma Stone
Veronica
Richard Gere
boss
Justin Long
fake Robin

Jason Sudeikis

fake Batman
Uma Thurman
fake Lois Lane
Chloë Grace Moretz
Amanda
Gerald Butler
leprechaun
Seann William Scott
Brian
Johnny Knoxville
Pete
Halle Berry
Emily
Stephen Merchant
Donald
Terrence Howard
Coach Jackson

Elizabeth Banks

Amy
Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.85:1]
Distributor
Momentum Pictures
8,100 ft +0 frames

Teenagers Calvin and JJ post a human-dartboard clip online and seem to get many hits – but Calvin's brother Baxter has rigged the counter. To pay Baxter back, JJ distracts him by having him search the internet for a legendarily disgusting film, 'Movie 43', while Calvin

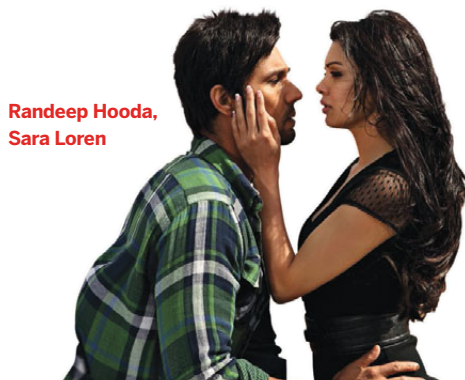
infects Baxter's laptop with viruses by logging on to a porn site. After viewing various sketches, Baxter discovers that 'Movie 43' is a message from his future self sent in an attempt to avert an apocalypse, but he is unable to use his now slow laptop to save the world.

Murder 3

India 2013
Director: Vishesh Bhatt
Certificate 15 123m 0s

Reviewed by Naman Ramachandran

Like Vishesh Films' other franchises *Raaz*, *Jannat* and *Jism*, *Murder 3* has no thematic similarity with the first two films in the series. *Murder* (2004) sought inspiration from *Unfaithful* (2002), while *Murder 2* (2011) had shades of *The Chaser* (2008) and *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991). *Murder 3* is an official remake of Andrés Baiz's *La cara oculta* (2011) and debutant director Vishesh Bhatt stays largely faithful to the source. Sadly, Bhatt manages to leach the remake of the original's strong elements of suspense, and in telling the tale of a philandering photographer whose girlfriends take turns getting locked in a hidden bunker in a house where things go bump in the night, he replicates Baiz's lack of success in getting strong performances from his leads, critical in what is essentially a tight three-hander. The inevitable songs act as speed bumps but enliven the listless narrative. **S**



Randeep Hooda,
Sara Loren

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

Mukesh Bhatt
Mahesh Bhatt
Screenplay
Mahesh Bhatt
Based on the film *La cara oculta* directed by Andrés Baiz
Director of Photography
Sunil Patel
Editor
Deven Murdeshwar
Production Designer
Rajat Poddar
Music
Pritam
[Chakraborty]

Lyrics

Sayed Quadri
Sound Designers
Kunal Mehta
Parikshit Lalvani

Production Companies

Fox Star Studios presents in association with
Manesh Bhatt
a Mukesh Bhatt production
Vishesh Films
Executive Producer
Kumkum Saigal

Cast

Randeep Hooda
Vikram
Aditi Rao Hydari
Roshni
Sara Loren
Nisha

In Colour

[2.35:1]
Subtitles

Distributor

Fox Star Studios
11,070 ft +0 frames

Cape Town, the present. Wildlife photographer Vikram gets a fashion photography job in Mumbai and moves there with his girlfriend Roshni. Vikram is an instant success and buys a colonial house on the city's outskirts. Suspecting Vikram of being unfaithful, Roshni leaves a farewell video for him and locks herself in a soundproof bunker in the house. The bunker has two-way mirrors so that she can observe her beau – but she forgets the key and is trapped. Vikram soon takes up with Nisha and she moves in. Nisha is spooked by distant sounds made by Roshni, who eventually manages to communicate with her. Nisha refuses to open the bunker door and relents only when she receives proof of Vikram's infidelity. When Nisha opens the bunker door, Roshni overpowers her and locks her in. Vikram, already under investigation for the disappearance of Roshni, is now in further trouble with the police. Roshni returns to Cape Town.

The Odd Life of Timothy Green

USA 2012
Director: Peter Hedges
Certificate U 104m 31s

Reviewed by Kate Stables

This is surely the year of the customised fantasy companion on film. *Ted* and *Ruby Sparks* have already shown off the havoc created by a wish-built best friend or girlfriend, and this time Timothy Green, a literal child of nature, grows overnight from the wish-list that his infertile parents have buried in their garden. But while *Ted* and *Ruby Sparks* cheerfully examine the inherent narcissism (and creepiness) of creating your own perfect playmate, this sentimental family drama stays strictly on the sunny side of the street – as does its eerily perfect eponymous hero, performing salutes to the sun to top up his photosynthesis.

The film's mawkish narrative has the unadorned simplicity of a folktale, as Jim and Cindy Green gladly claim their nature boy and he sets about fulfilling their dreams for a short time. Yet, without the be-careful-what-you-wish-for menace that made Jan Svankmajer's ravenous log-baby in *Little Otik* (2000) compelling, Timothy's leaf-adorned legs and magical ability to charm people seem simply sappy.

Warmth, rather than whimsy, is the usual setting for writer-director Peter Hedges, who explored the problems of dysfunctional families in his previous films *Dan in Real Life* (2007) and *Pieces of April* (2003) and in his adaptation of his own novel for Lasse Hallström's *What's Eating Gilbert Grape?* (1993). Here he seems hamstrung by co-writer/producer Ahmet Zappa's simplistic central concept, producing a contrived plot that heavily signals everything from the threatened closure of the town's pencil factory (Timothy helps Jim invent a leaf-mould eco-pencil, naturally) to Timothy's waning time with his parents (his leg-leaves gradually fall off, like a wilting pot plant).

Even the film's laudable cheerleading for adoptive families is hampered by its determination to let Timothy singlehandedly settle a quiver of family dysfunctions, solving sibling rivalry between Cindy and her pushy sister (archly named 'Brenda Best') and a rift between Jim and his distant, macho father, all using the artless, otherworldly amiability with which the elfin CJ Adams infuses Timothy. As his parents, Jennifer Garner and



A curious case: CJ Adams, Jennifer Garner

Joel Edgerton are reduced to furious mugging to try to keep this thin stuff aloft, while fine actors like Dianne Wiest fail to flesh out thin cameos that teeter on the edge of caricature.

Despite the film's small-town setting, bucolic visuals and largely everyday problems, it never succeeds in creating that bedrock of reality which usefully earthed the fantastical elements in the not-dissimilar *Field of Dreams* (1989). Instead, it's a sticky paean to parental narcissism in which Timothy is the realisation of his parents' hopes and the answer to all his family's woes. Even his excursion into puppy love with school friend Joni is filled with selfless do-goodery, as he coaxes her into revealing the birthmark she despises. It's too saccharine for adults and frankly too tame for children (the saintly Timothy makes fellow fantasy-son Pinocchio seem like a juvenile delinquent), and one wonders where it will manage to put down roots. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Jim Whitaker
Scott Sanders
Ahmet Zappa
Screenplay
Peter Hedges
Director of Photography
John Toll
Film Editor
Andrew Mondshein
Production Designer
Wynn Thomas
Music
Geoff Zanelli
Sound Mixer
Whit Norris
Costume Designer
Susie Desanto
Visual Effects
Method Studios
The Mill
Cosa Visual Effects

©Disney Enterprises, Inc.

Production Company

Disney presents a Scott Sanders production
Executive Producers
John Cameron
Mara Jacobs

Cast

Jennifer Garner
Cindy Green
Joel Edgerton
Jim Green
CJ Adams
Timothy Green
Odeya Rush
Joni Jerome
Shohreh Aghdashloo
Evette Onat

Rosemarie DeWitt

Brenda Best
David Morse
James Green Sr
M. Emmet Walsh
Uncle Bub
Lois Smith
Aunt Mel
Lin-Manuel Miranda
Reggie
Dianne Wiest
Ms Bernice Crudstaff

Dolby Digital/ Datasat

In Colour
[1.85:1]

Distributor

Buena Vista International (UK)
9,406 ft +8 frames

US, present day. Infertile couple Jim and Cindy Green tell an adoption panel about their brief parenthood, which we see in flashbacks. One night they fantasise about the son they'll never have, burying a list of his best qualities in their garden. That night, a ten-year-old boy appears, with leaves growing out of his legs. They present him to their families as their newly adopted son Timothy. Gradually he displays all the qualities they wished for, healing rifts with other members of the family. Timothy experiences puppy love with school friend Joni. He also helps Jim invent a pencil made from leaves, to save the town's failing pencil factory, but Jim's boss ignores it. Timothy's leg-leaves are gradually falling off. When Jim's boss proposes the leaf-pencil idea as his own to the town, the family reveals the project's true origins, and Timothy's leafy legs. As the last leaf drops, Timothy tells his parents that he must go, and disappears into the night. He has left a leaf with everyone he helped. The adoption panel visits Jim and Cindy, bringing a little girl to meet them.

One Mile Away

United Kingdom 2012
Director: Penny Woolcock
Certificate 15 90m 35s

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

In 2009, Penny Woolcock directed *1 Day*, a fiction film set in the world of gangs in Birmingham. Devised as a grime musical, it was punctuated with freestyle raps, most of them devised by the cast, whom Woolcock had recruited from the streets where the film was shot. Her lead – Dylan Duffus, himself a gang member – played Flash, a drug dealer urgently in need of a lot of ‘scrilla’ (cash) when a dealer higher up the chain who has lent him money is unexpectedly released from jail. For the purposes of her story, Woolcock invented two rival gangs, the Zampa Boys and the Old Street Crew. Warned off by the police, cinemas in the Birmingham area refused to show the film, despite its explicit message: anti-drugs, anti-crime and deploring ‘postcode’ gang violence. At one point Flash, referring to his gang and their rivals, muses, “We need to sit down and reason differently one of these days.”

Inspired by the film, another young black man called Shabba, a leading member of the Johnson Crew gang based in Aston (Birmingham B6), contacted Woolcock asking for her help in setting up a meeting with Dylan Duffus. Between his gang and Dylan’s, the Burger Bar Boys in Handsworth (Birmingham B20), there’s a 15-year history of violence, giving the city the highest concentration of gun crime in Britain; two of its most famous victims were Letisha Shakespeare and Charlene Ellis, teenage girls caught in the crossfire outside a party in the Birchfield Road (the ‘front line’ between the two territories) in January 2003. When Shabba and Dylan sat down together in a hotel room in the autumn of 2010, it was not only the first time members of the rival gangs had met to talk, but the first time they’d encountered each other without being armed and ready for combat.

The documentary *One Mile Away* traces the slow, cautious process of convincing other gang members to support the often faltering peace process. Most of them, it’s repeatedly emphasised, have grown up knowing no other way of life; as one young gang member explains to Woolcock, “What looks terrible to you looks normal to us.” Further obstacles are the instant suspicion on the part of their associates that Shabba or Dylan have a hidden agenda – that they stand to gain in some way, or that they’re police informants – and the relentless tit-for-tat of blood feuds. “Every time you try to tell him something,” Dylan remarks wearily after one encounter with a fellow Burger Bar member, “he’s like, ‘But he killed my friend’.” On Boxing Day 2010, only a few weeks after the initial meeting between Shabba and Dylan, an outbreak of violence in the Bullring shopping centre seems likely to abort the whole initiative; six months later, Shabba admits that he’s made almost no headway.

Self-effacingly, Woolcock stays largely offscreen; occasionally we hear her asking questions or acting as a sounding board for the gang members who open up to her seemingly without reservation. (One of them, a Johnson Crew member called Sykes, delivers a perceptive mini-lecture on how the guns made in Birmingham in the 19th century were used to enforce Britain’s imperialist rule, which in turn led to the establishment of the black immigrant



Peace in our time: ‘One Mile Away’

communities of today.) What’s remarkable is how this white, middle-class, middle-aged woman – who isn’t even from Birmingham – clearly enjoys the trust of gang members on both sides, young black men whose attitude to the outside community is generally one of suspicious hostility. It’s a hostility that’s widely reciprocated. “Born black, you’re born a criminal,” remarks one of them bitterly, while another notes how their mere presence on the streets is enough to attract unwelcome attention from the police, whom he describes as “the biggest gang in the world”. During the riots of August 2011, Dylan (who took no part in them) points out, “Just ‘cause I’m black and I’m standing here [the police] want to question me.” At one point, again during the riots, even Woolcock comes in for some minor police harassment when a brash young copper holds his hand over the lens and orders her to stop filming. She refuses, and we’re told that

15 minutes later the police contacted Channel 4 (co-producing) to demand all her footage.

Ironically, it’s these same riots, starting out in London and rapidly spreading across the country, which rekindle the faltering peace initiative. Finding common cause, the gang members stop attacking each other; as Dylan comments, “You could call it a four-day truce.” In their wake, the breakthrough: the rival gang members start coming together, talking and negotiating, viewing Woolcock’s footage, setting up a social enterprise and an educational programme to further reconciliation. The film’s final, optimistic onscreen title reads ‘The Peace Process Continues’. With *1 Day* and *One Mile Away*, Woolcock has achieved something exceptional: her projects have not only created a vivid picture of the complex, vital, fraught street life of our cities but – with any luck – started to change it for the better.

Credits and Synopsis

Producer
James Purnell
Camera
Penny Woolcock
Alex Metcalfe
Rebecca Lloyd-Evans
Kate Taunton
Editor
Alex Fry
Original Music
Urban Monk
Dubbing Mixer
Rob Hughes

©Rare Day (“What’s Going On”)
Limited/Channel Four Television
Production Companies
Creative England and

Channel 4 present a Rare Day production
Made with the support of Creative England
In association with Channel 4/Lip Sync
Supported by the Influence Film Foundation/Barrow Cadbury Trust/Fallon
The PUMA Creative Catalyst Award in partnership with the Channel 4 BRITDOC Foundation
Executive Producers
Peter Dale
Dan Lawson

In Colour Subtitles

Distributor
Brit Doc Films

8,152 ft +8 frames

Birmingham, autumn 2010. Filmmaker Penny Woolcock is contacted by Shabba, a young black man who’s a member of the Johnson Crew, a gang based in the Aston area of the city. He asks for her help in ending the long-running war between his gang and the Burger Bar Boys in neighbouring Handsworth. Penny contacts Dylan Duffus, a member of the Handsworth gang who starred in her 2009 feature film ‘1 Day’. Shabba and Dylan meet and agree to talk to their fellow gang members. However, various fatal incidents – including one in the Bullring shopping centre on Boxing Day – only harden vengeful attitudes on both sides. After almost a year, the peace initiative seems to be getting nowhere. But, unexpectedly, the August 2011 riots, spreading from London, unite the gangs in common cause against the police. In the wake of the riots, the peace process – though still fragile – at last seems to be making headway, and the gang members discuss how the violence could be ended.

Papadopoulos & Sons

United Kingdom 2012
Director: Marcus Markou

Reviewed by Thomas Dawson

Small family business is good but corporate finance is bad in writer-director Marcus Markou's self-distributed British independent feature. An unconvincing contemporary fairytale, *Papadopoulos & Sons* depicts its emotionally uptight multimillionaire protagonist Harry Papadopoulos discovering that success is simply "the joy you find" in life. Content to traffic in ethnic stereotypes – Greek people are naturally warm-blooded souls who like singing and dancing and not paying their taxes – its flimsy screenplay burdens Harry and his older sibling Spiros with a hefty childhood trauma: in 1974, during the Cypriot civil war, a fire killed both their parents and their middle brother Michael, leaving Spiros to bring up Harry in England. According to Markou, "serious critics" won't like *Papadopoulos & Sons* because it's "too much fun". Viewers, however, might question the awkward performances, the paucity of visual cinematic imagination and the fact that a significant character miraculously emerges from a coma to ensure a fraternal reconciliation before promptly passing away. 6



Greek to me: Stephen Dillane, Georges Corraface

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Sara Butler
Written by
Marcus Markou
Director of Photography
James Friend
Editor
Sebastian Morrison
Production Designer
Julian Fullalove
Original Score
Stephen Warbeck
Production Sound Mixer
Simon Koelmeyer
Costume Designer
Robert Lever

©Double M Films
Production Companies
Double M Films

presents in association with
Shoot the Company
Executive Producers
Andrew Markou
Marcus Markou

Cast

Stephen Dillane
Harry Papadopoulos
Georges Corraface
Spiros Papadopoulos
Ed Stoppard
Rob
Georgia Groome
Katie Papadopoulos
Selina Cadell
Mrs Parrington
Cosima Shaw
Sophie
Frank Dillane
James

Papadopoulos

In Colour

Distributor
Miracle
Communications

Widowed father of three and self-made multimillionaire Harry Papadopoulos is facing financial ruin during a banking crisis. Forced to leave his country mansion, he and his estranged older brother Spiros reopen the Three Brothers fish-and-chip shop in suburban London, which they ran together decades earlier. Through a corporate finance company, Harry arranges a deal with a Norwegian bank which allows him to move back to his former house and remain CEO of Papadopoulos & Sons. Following Spiros's fatal heart attack, Harry and his children decide to continue working at the Three Brothers.

The Paperboy

Director: Lee Daniels
Certificate 15 106m 56s

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

See that plot synopsis? It's all from Wikipedia. It's not that I didn't watch *The Paperboy*; it's just that I honestly have no idea what happened in it.

The critical consensus on *The Paperboy* will be that it is Lee Daniels's failure, after the promise showed by 2009's laurel-heaped *Precious*, but that's just an ass-covering excuse. The praise for the toxic *Precious*, which gave Daniels name-above-the-title brand recognition and wrote him a blank cheque for auteur indulgence on his next project, is a failure that must be laid at the feet of film culture as a whole. We voted for this to happen; Daniels is only doing what he does best, so to speak.

What is that? Well, *The Paperboy* does for poor rural whites what *Precious* did for poor urban blacks: depicts them at their most base and animalistic. The film is the ultimate and uncompromised expression of Daniels's lurid, leering worldview, which tends towards grotesque caricature, and it's an extraordinarily difficult film to watch. Literally, it's hard to look at it directly. Not since Lodge Kerrigan's *Clean, Shaven* (1993) have I seen a movie that so closely seems to approximate the subjective experience of mental illness – though Kerrigan discernibly *set out* to do that.

The first clue that *The Paperboy* is a film totally out of control is that its story, which has a Florida family of newspapermen at its centre, is caulked together with the droning voiceover of the household's black maid (Macy Gray). From an uncertain point in the future, speaking to an unknown interlocutor, this omniscient domestic tells the story of the Jansen brothers (Zac Efron and Matthew McConaughey). She manages to emcee all onscreen happenings in spite of the fact that she isn't present to witness much or indeed most of the action, and at times is called on to fill in the finer points of psychology overlooked on set by Daniels: "I guess you could say he had abandonment issues..."

The Paperboy was 'adapted' from a 1995 novel

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Hilary Shor
Lee Daniels
Avi Lerner
Ed Cathell III
Cassian Elwes
Screenplay
Pete Dexter
Based on the novel
by Pete Dexter
Director of Photography
Roberto Schaefer
Editor
Joe Klotz
Production Designer
Daniel T. Dorrance
Music
Mario Grigorov
Sound Mixer
Jay Meagher
Costume Designer
Caroline Eselin-Schaefer

©Paperboy
Productions, Inc.
Production Companies

Millennium Films
presents a Nu Image
and Lee Daniels
Entertainment
production
Executive Producers
Danny Dimbort
Trevor Short
John Thompson
Boaz Davidson
Mark Gill
Jan De Bont

Cast

Matthew McConaughey
Ward Jansen
Zac Efron
Jack Jansen
David Oyelowo
Yardley Acheman
Macy Gray
Anita Chester
John Cusack
Hillary Van Wetter
Nicole Kidman
Charlotte Bless
Scott Glenn
W.W. Jansen

Ned Bellamy
Tyree Van Wetter
Nealla Gordon
Ellen Guthrie

Dolby Digital
In Colour
2.35:1 [Panavision]

Distributor
Lionsgate UK
9,624 ft +0 frames



Brothers grim: Matthew McConaughey, Zac Efron

by Pete Dexter; the screenplay is by the author and Daniels. I have put the word adapted in scare-quotes because it is difficult to believe that anything was left out in this mad piling-on of incident with no apparent purpose other than burying the audience in (mostly unpleasant) sensation. This includes S&M mishaps, McConaughey monologuing nude on the toilet, a no-touching conjugal prison visit which climaxes with John Cusack's Crisco-greasy convicted killer coming in his pants and a house call on a family of gator-gutting white trash Neanderthal swamp rats who make Faulkner's Snopeses look like country gentry.

While the incessant narration almost keeps the viewer apace of what's happening onscreen, Daniels gives his sluggardly film the illusion of vigour through flagellating stylisation, utilising multiple frame sizes, overloud random needle-drop music cues and dreamy cross-fades. The result is a film that you can call just about anything but mediocre. In fact, there's approximately a five per cent chance that *The Paperboy* is the work of some outsider art genius who's inexplicably got hold of a prestige cast and budget. The other 95 per cent says it's an unmitigated disaster. I'm going with the smart odds. 5

Florida, 1967 and sometime in the future. Anita, a former maid, tells an interviewer about events she witnessed when working for the Jansens, a family in the newspaper business.

In 1967, older brother Ward Jansen returns home from Miami with a fellow reporter, a black Englishman named Yardley, to investigate the possibly botched case against Death Row inmate Van Wetter. Ward is assisted in his investigation by his younger brother Jack and by Charlotte Bless, a local woman who has, through a steamy correspondence, become engaged to Van Wetter without meeting him. Jack falls in love with Charlotte, only to be rebuffed and later humiliated by her when he is stung by jellyfish at the beach and she urinates on him to salve the burns. Jack's father, editor of the local paper, turns this into a national story. On a subsequent trip to Miami, Jack learns that Ward is gay when the latter is hospitalised following an incident of rough sex gone awry. In the aftermath of this trauma, Charlotte has sex with Jack, only to abandon him when Van Wetter, out of prison, sweeps her off to his home in the Everglades. Reunited at their father's wedding, Ward and Jack go to rescue Charlotte, but arrive after Van Wetter has murdered her. In the ensuing struggle, Ward is killed. Jack escapes with Ward and Charlotte's bodies.

Post Tenebras Lux

Mexico/France/Germany/The Netherlands 2012

Director: Carlos Reygadas

Certificate 18 114m 43s

Reviewed by Tony Rayns

See Feature
on page 50

After three discursive but basically story-driven features, which have made him one of the most admired/hated figures in contemporary cinema, Carlos Reygadas lets it all hang out in a fourth feature which has very little narrative at all. *Post Tenebras Lux* – the Latin title means ‘The Light After Darkness’ – takes its cues from Tarkovsky’s *Mirror* (1975). Framed in the now little-used Academy ratio, it stitches together fragments of personal memory and fantasy, garnished with a smattering of visual effects and the odd hint of social commentary, to build a poetic, psychedelic rhapsody in which the director’s tendencies towards abstract expressionism are allowed off the leash. Obviously *Mirror*’s patchwork didn’t include anything as disruptive or apparently anomalous as two glimpses of an English school rugby match or a visit to a European free-sex sauna, but then Tarkovsky’s life didn’t encompass stints at a private school in Yorkshire or working as a lawyer for the EU in Brussels, both of which do feature in Reygadas’s bio.

The film centres on Juan, the patriarch of a nuclear family, who is if not a stand-in for Reygadas then at least a channel for the author’s confessions, obsessions and fears. The prosperous Juan has brought his wife and their two kids (played most of the time by Reygadas’s actual son and daughter) to a new home he has built in the remote countryside. Aside from inevitable moments of awkwardness in their dealings with the locals, the family initially seems happy and contented. But the two opening sequences have already intimated trouble ahead.

The first is a suite of Steadicam shots of the little girl Rut padding about a waterlogged meadow as dusk falls and a thunderstorm breaks, surrounded by animals, all of them much bigger than she is; we later learn that this was her dream but the images of a small child apparently at risk cast an ominous pall over all that follows. The second shows Juan’s household at night visited by a glowing red demon, a human-goat hybrid sporting both prominent human genitals and a long, arrow-tipped tail, which carries a toolbox and is observed only by the boy Eleazar. This is presumably the boy’s dream, matching his little sister’s and expressing his fear of his father – a fear that seems well-founded, given that Juan is soon seen going berserk as he ‘punishes’ one of his dogs and then admitting that he’s addicted to internet porn. The orgy sequence in the sauna (Juan watches while his wife is brought to orgasm by a stranger in the Duchamp Room – a bride ravished by her bachelors indeed) finds its objective correlative in a family row at the kitchen sink: Juan comes on raunchy to his wife but then lapses into a litany of complaints about her frigidity. In short, Juan has gone a bit wrong in the head.

Eventually, on his deathbed, moved by his wife singing Neil Young’s ‘It’s a Dream’ at the piano, Juan regrets his latter-day ‘sickness’ and loses himself in memories of ecstatic childhood experiences. The film, though, is mostly locked in the purgatory of the present:



Devil may care: Nathalia Acevedo

a world in which nature is both magical and threatening, a laidback rural community of elderly dope-smokers which turns out to be ravaged by alcoholism, crime, petty spite and ultimately murder and suicide, and a psychically skewed territory in which families are betrayed by absent or crazy patriarchs.

Reygadas envisions this purgatory magnificently, trumping his own more laborious efforts in *Japón* (2002) and *Silent Light* (2007) and leaving memories of the misbegotten *Battle in Heaven* (2005) far behind. To match the sheer sensory impact of the ambiguous tone and imagery in *Post Tenebras Lux* you’d have to look back to its distant ancestor, a film Reygadas has surely never heard of: David Larcher’s psychedelic odyssey *Mare’s Tail*, a forgotten

classic of British indie cinema, similarly rooted in autobiography and equally haunted by the twin impulses to experiment and transgress. Like Larcher, Reygadas has grown impatient with rationality, with narrative and with psychological explications... but not to the degree that he loses sight of the pleasures and pains of banal realities such as Christmas family reunions or excursions to the seaside. The most disruptive element here is the rugby match, dropped into the film in the middle and at the end. The two rugby scenes are wild anomalies – visually, linguistically, you name it – but their incursion into this Mexican backwater gives the film a kick when it threatens to become somnolent. They loudly champion a strategy that’s missing from this fallen Eden: teamwork. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Jaime Romandia
Carlos Reygadas
Written by
Carlos Reygadas
Director of Photography
Alexis Zabé
Editor
Natalia López
Production Designer
Gerardo Tagle
Sound
Gilles Laurent

©NoDream Cinema, Mantarraya Producciones, Fondo para la Producción Cinematográfica de Calidad (Foprocine - México), Le Pacte, Arte France Cinema
Production Companies
Nodream and Mantarraya present in co-production with Le Pacte, ARTE France Cinema, IMCINE - CONACULTA, Fondo para la

producción cinematográfica de calidad (FOPROCINE - México), The Match Factory, Topkapi Films and Ticomán and with the support of Arte France, Fonds Sud Cinéma, Centre National du Cinéma et de l’Image Animée, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères et Européennes – Institut Français (France), Film und Medien Stiftung NRW and The Netherlands Film Fund

Cast

Rut Reygadas
Rut
Eleazar Reygadas
Eleazar
Nathalia Acevedo
Nathalia
Adolfo Jiménez
Castro
Juan

Willebaldo Torres
El Siete

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[1.37:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Independent
Cinema Office

10,324 ft +8 frames

Rural Mexico. Coming from a large and prosperous middle-class family, Juan has taken his wife Natalia and their children Eleazar and Rutlila (Rut for short) to a remote village in Morelos where he has built them a comfortable home. In a series of more or less discrete episodes, which make no particular distinction between present, possible future and fantasy, the film explores the family’s life and its interactions with neighbours and relatives. A demonic red figure carrying a toolbox visits the household at night. Juan punishes one of the family’s dogs for misbehaving, almost killing it. Juan is taken to a 12-step self-help-programme meeting by the handyman El Siete and hears confessions of alcoholism and other vices; he admits to El Siete that he’s addicted to internet porn. English schoolboys prepare for a rugby game. Juan remembers/imagines a visit to a Belgian free-sex sauna with Natalia. Juan riles Natalia by complaining about her taste and reluctance to have sex with him. Juan imagines a fractious gathering of his extended family, at which his children are several years older. Juan catches El Siete and villager Glove robbing the house of computer equipment; El Siete shoots Juan in the chest, hitting one lung. Bedridden, Juan recalls an ecstatic childhood and regrets his later ‘sickness’. El Siete looks up his long-abandoned wife and children. When he learns that Juan has died, El Siete kills himself. The schoolboy rugby match is a close-run thing; one side resolves to rely on better teamwork to win.

Reincarnated

USA 2013

Director: Andy Capper aka 'Lil Head'

Reviewed by Ashley Clark

Overhauls of image and identity are nothing new in the world of popular music culture. In the 1970s, David Bowie came up with a different incarnation every couple of years, and the alter-ego tradition has continued into the 21st century with the likes of Eminem (Slim Shady) and Beyoncé (Sasha Fierce). Eyebrows were nonetheless raised in July last year when rapper and increasingly ubiquitous media personality Snoop Dogg announced not only a new stage name, Snoop Lion (apparently conferred on him by a Rastafarian priest), but also a spiritual conversion to the Rastafari movement. Was he for real?

This uncritical documentary offers little in the way of an answer. Funded by Snoop in exchange for editorial control, it's a companion piece to the rapper's album *Reincarnated* and consists mainly of long sequences of its subject smoking weed, wandering around Jamaica, talking about himself, larking with colleagues in the studio and then smoking weed again.

It is of course tempting to see this as the latest instance of claw-fingered opportunism from a man not shy of working double-time to keep himself in the public eye. His CV bears a seemingly never-ending list of media ventures (including *Doggy Fizzle Televizzle*, a short-lived MTV sketch show worthy of canonisation for its name alone) and endorsements (sample: 'Hack Is Wack' for Norton AntiVirus). Moreover, with its boilerplate mash-up of celebrity self-worship and unlikely cultural transposition, *Reincarnated* bears all the hallmarks of a common-or-garden reality-TV project. There's a compound modernity to Snoop's embrace of media intertextuality in the aid of self-promotion, and it appears to be at full-throttle here.

Where this project's apparent cynicism starts to become genuinely problematic is in its selective representation of the Rastafari movement, which is at best basic and at worst shamefully exploitative. Produced by Vice – an increasingly influential media company precision-tooled to appeal to a white, middle-



Old dogs, new tricks: Snoop Dogg

class, irono-hipster audience – it makes a fetish of marijuana (the opening credits appear in a huge puff of smoke) and neglects even to attempt to paint a deeper picture of the codes, ethics and meaning behind the movement which arose in 1930s Jamaica following the crowning of Haile Selassie I as emperor of Ethiopia. Bunny Wailer, the last surviving member of Bob Marley's original band, appears awkwardly in the film, and has since accused Snoop in the press of "outright fraudulent use of the Rastafari community's personalities and symbolism". Meanwhile, in a seven-page missive to the press, the Rastafari Millennium Council admonished: "Smoking weed and loving Bob Marley and reggae music is not what defines the Rastafari Indigenous Culture!" Snoop's proliferation of baselessly inane comments throughout ("Hip-hop is a form of reggae, and it's the same message") make it easy to see where they were coming from.

Neither does the film carry much weight from a musical standpoint. All the tracks we hear are rough works-in-progress, but that doesn't stop Snoop optimistically professing himself to be the reincarnation of Bob Marley (evidently forgetting that they were both alive at the same time). One wonders what the late legend might've made of 'Fruit Juice', a clattering, dancehall-flavoured ode to fruit juice, written and recorded immediately after Snoop has drunk some fruit juice.

Moments that break the film's carefully controlled, media-savvy sterility hit harder for being so sparse. The most moving sequences find Snoop in confessional mode, ruminating about his hard-knock upbringing and professing regret that he was unable to squash his beef with label-mate/friend Tupac Shakur before the latter's murder in 1996. And when Snoop speaks of his renunciation of violence and 'gangsta' culture, you believe his 'conversion' has some basis in emotional, spiritual truth, and that he might have found solace in the genuine credo of love and peace promoted by the Rastafari movement.

As a documentary, *Reincarnated* is comically lightweight and mechanical, if interesting as an ambiguous case study of 21st-century media opportunism. But its affable subject is likeable, and there's one genuine belly laugh when Snoop, lamenting his X-rated back catalogue, offers perhaps the best justification for his new venture: "I know Obama wants me to play the White House, but what the fuck can I perform?"

Sammy's Great Escape

Belgium/France/Italy/Luxembourg/USA 2012

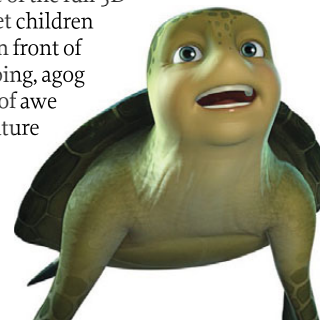
Directors: Ben Stassen, Vincent Kesteloot

Certificate U 93m 0s

Reviewed by Anton Bitel

The underwater mafiosi from *Shark Tale*. The comic penguins from *Happy Feet* and *Madagascar*. The cross-generational counterplotting and POW-movie pastiche (and even the clownfish!) from *Finding Nemo*. Offering minor variations on all these while also retreading many of the key motifs from its predecessor, *A Turtle's Tale: Sammy's Adventures* (2010), the animated *Sammy's Great Escape* is derivative to a fault, as its heroes in a half-shell must work in concert with other aquatic creatures to escape imprisonment in a luxury Gulf State aquarium.

This sequel suffers from a weak script full of decidedly fishy puns ("He rules this place with an iron fin", "If the shell fits, wear it") and wholesome bromides about helping one another and never giving up, all ensuring that it remains firmly targeted at very young audiences, unlike Lee Daehee's altogether more harrowing (but thematically rather similar) trapped-in-a-tank trauma-toon *Padak* (2012). The film's greatest asset, however, is clear from the opening 'shots' of turtle hatchlings swimming to 'camera' and seagulls swooping through the air: visual spectacle trumps all else here, as Belgium-based nWave Pictures (*Fly Me to the Moon*) makes exemplary use of the full 3D spectrum to get children reaching out in front of them and gasping, agog with the kind of awe from which future cinephilia is hatched.



'Sammy's Great Escape'

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by

Ben Stassen
Caroline Van Iseghem

Dominic Paris
Gina Gallo

Mimi Maynard

Screenplay

Dominic Paris
Based on an original story by Ben Stassen and Dominic Paris

Art Director

Jérémie Degruon
Music

Ramin Djawadi

Sound Design

Yves Renard
Pierre 'Lele' Lebecque

Animation Supervisor

Dirk de Loose

Executive Producers

Olivier Courson
Eric Dillens

©Around the World

in 50 Years S.p.r.l./Paradis Films SARL/Eagle Pictures S.p.A.

Production Companies

Studio Canal and nWave Pictures

presents an Around the World in 50 Years/Paradis Films/Eagle Pictures

co-production in association with

Anton Capital Entertainment, Canal+ and Illuminata Pictures

A film by Ben Stassen and Vincent Kesteloot

Executive Producers

Olivier Courson
Eric Dillens

Some screenings presented in 3D

8,370ft +0 frames

Voice Cast

Billy Unger
younger Sammy

Wesley Johnny
older Sammy

Carlos McCullers III
Ray

Isabelle Fuhrman
Shelly

Joe Thomas
Lulu

In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Warner Bros
Distributors UK

Some screenings presented in 3D

8,370ft +0 frames

The Caribbean. As turtles Sammy and Ray oversee the hatching of their respective grandchildren Ella and Ricky, they are captured and taken to be exhibits at a luxury Dubai aquarium. Recruited by mobster seahorse Big D to help in his latest escape plot, Sammy and Ray realise that he doesn't really want to leave his fiefdom. They devise a breakout plan for all their new friends, aided on the outside by Ella, Ricky and some octopuses and squid.

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

Ted Chung
Suroosh Alvi

Directors of Photography

Nick Neofitidis
aka 'Slic Nic'

William Fairman
aka 'Manson'

Willie Toledo
aka 'Willie T'

Editors

Bernardo Loyola
Emily Wilson

Jared Perez
Dave Gutt

Art Director

Matt Schoen

Music Supervisors

Ricki Askin

Justin Li

Snoop Lion

Supervising Sound Editor

Jonathan Null

@Vice Media, Inc., Snoopadelic Pictures, Inc.

Production Companies

A Vice Films and Snoopadelic Films

production

Executive Producers

Calvin Broadus [i.e. Snoop Lion]

Shante Broadus aka 'Boss Lady'

Suroosh Alvi

Shane Smith

Eddy Moretti

Andrew Creighton

In Colour

Distributor

Dogwoof

A documentary following rapper Snoop Dogg's 2011 trip to Jamaica, where he discovers more about the Rastafari movement and records a new reggae-influenced album ('Reincarnated') with producer Diplo. He meets a host of local figures and reflects in interview on his life and career.

Shell

United Kingdom/Germany 2012

Director: Scott Graham

Certificate 15 90m 52s

Reviewed by Kate Stables

See interview
on page 12

The news that a feature has been adapted from its director's previous short film inevitably (if unfairly) causes the reviewer's heart to sink in anticipation of narrative padding or a pervasive whiff of déjà vu. Fortunately, Scott Graham's supremely confident and sensitive reworking of his fine 2007 short *Shell*, about a restless teenage girl trapped with her father in a dilapidated Scottish petrol station, is an object lesson in reimagining a project at full length. Using many of the same narrative ingredients while shucking off its nods to margin-living classics such as *Paris, Texas* (1984), *Shell*-the-feature sports riskier themes and standout performances but never loses the grace and originality that marked out *Shell*-the-short.

Building on the delicate depiction of loneliness that also characterised his 2010 short *Native Son*, Graham has created a compelling character study. The bigger canvas lets him build a detailed picture of how the wild landscape and unrelenting isolation of a West Highland glen have forged 17-year-old Shell and her terse father Pete into an uneasy unit, fiercely loyal yet increasingly troubling to one another. His style is an arresting, unbeautified poetic realism, subjecting Shell's meagre routine, as she drifts from bed to stove to forecourt and back, to a close observation that seems quasi-documentary. Never drifting into forensic miserablism, DP Yoliswa Gärtig's camera alternates between a watchful claustrophobia and unnerving widescreen landscape shots, full of lowering beaten-metal skies and bleached grasses that emphasise the pace and space of Shell's predicament. Visually, the film is fashionably austere, exhibiting a formal control akin to Andrea Arnold's *Wuthering Heights* (2011), where the landscape and the omnipresent wind are foregrounded as much as the characters. Yet the naturalism doesn't invoke an affectless tone here, Duane Hopkins-style. Graham's pared-down approach speaks volumes about his heroine, grasping at her shreds of life with all her senses. Gazing down the two-lane blacktop for salvation, touching her father tentatively, sniffing him jealously when he returns from seeking sex in town, Chloe Pirrie's penned-in Shell is fully present, experienced rather than observed. There's the faint batsqueak of Bill Douglas's cinema too, in the meticulously naturalistic soundtrack (where rain sounds differ subtly between shop and the house behind). When Shell dances to a blaring radio, or sings a folksong in her bath, you register the shock of the sound erupting into a house where only the buffeting wind chatters.

Loneliness lies across all the film's characters, as much a local feature as hard winters and roadkill deer. Shell is pursued by a pair of customers – disconsolate divorcé Hugh and handdog local teenager Adam – and is as unsettling an object of desire to them as she is to her father. Laudably, the film resists the temptation to objectify her sexually (unlike the short, whose restraint lapsed into a shot that licked up the back of her booted knees like a



End of the road: Chloe Pirrie

puppy). More interested in how Shell inhabits her body than how she shows it off, the film tracks her with an interest that's empathetic rather than lubricious, registering her delight in the pair of jeans that Hugh proffers rather than the curve of her behind. The garage, stuck out on the margin of society, becomes a space where father and daughter live tensely as outsiders (there's a wry exchange when a pair of rescued motorists take them for a couple, due to Pete's lack of paternal vibe). Yet it's also a refuge where boundaries dissolve for Hugh and Adam, whose desperate plays for Shell are respectively humiliating and full of false hope.

What of Shell's own desire? Her longing to take her runaway mother's place in Pete's life is the real catalyst for change, Pete brushing her off uneasily ("We must get you a dog or something") until events and a broken-down boiler overtake them. Like the careful portrayal of necrophilia in *Native Son*, the film is unflinching but understated about Pete and Shell's incestuous

impulses. It looks beyond transgression to the loneliness that engenders their passion, without suggesting that *tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner*.

Not everything is handled quite as nimbly as this. There's a certain amount of heavyhanded symbolism equating Shell with the wild deer that tittup around the forecourt at night, one coming to grief under a car and eventually ending up on to Shell's plate ("It's like eating my own flesh"). Moreover, once the film's tragedy has unwound, Shell's impetuous final flight in a passing lorry feels like overkill. In matters of performance, however, it's beyond reproach, with Chloe Pirrie's Shell rubbed visibly raw between her eagerness for life and her fears for her father. Even more impressive is Joseph Mawle's conflicted Pete, whose conscience and neediness wrestle in his dour, damped-down performance. His biggest achievement is in making Pete's final sacrifice unbearably moving rather than tinnily melodramatic, as he takes the leap into darkness that will release his daughter into her own life. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Producers
David Smith
Margaret Matheson
Written by
Scott Graham
Director of Photography
Yoliswa Gärtig
Editor
Rachel Turnard
Production Designer
James Lapsley
Sound Recordist

Chris Campion
Costume Designer
Rebecca Gore

@Broken Spectre
Jockey Mutch
Ltd./Flying Moon
Filmproduktion
GmbH/The British
Film Institute/
Creative Scotland
Production Companies

BFI and Creative
Scotland present
a Broken Spectre
production in
association with
Bard Entertainments,
Flying Moon and
Molinaire
In co-production
with ZDF/ARTE
Developed with
the support of the
Angers workshop

- 2010 session
Developed with
the support of UK
Film Council
UK Film Council
Lottery Funded
Made with the
support of the
BFI's Film Fund
Supported by the
National Lottery
through Creative
Scotland

Cast
Joseph Mawle
Pete
Chloe Pirrie
Shell
Michael Smiley
Hugh
Iain de Caestecker
Adam
Paul Hickey
Robert
Kate Dickie
Clare

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Verve Pictures

8.178 ft +0 frames

Scotland, present day. Shell is a restless 17-year-old living with her epileptic father Pete in an isolated garage. Her mother ran away when she was small and she is fiercely loyal to Pete. Middle-aged divorcé Hugh and local boy Adam make plays for her attention. Pete is uneasy about the sexual tension growing between him and Shell. They rescue a couple whose car smashes into a deer. Shell is jealous when Pete goes to town for sex. The boiler breaks down, forcing Pete and Shell to share a bed. Hugh makes a

desperate pass at her, and is gently rebuffed. Shell accepts a date with Adam and has joyless sex with him. He attaches himself to her. When Shell runs after a car with a child's forgotten toy, Pete thinks she has run off. On her return he pleads with her not to leave him, and they kiss like lovers. Horrified, Pete throws himself under a passing lorry and is killed. Adam stays with Shell to comfort her. The following morning Shell impetuously begs a lift on a passing truck, leaving Adam and the garage behind.

Sleep Tight

Spain 2011
Director: Jaume Balagueró
Certificate 15 100m 51s

Reviewed by Mar Diestro-Dópido

Affable, kind and obliging César (Luis Tosar), the protagonist of Jaume Balagueró's new feature film *Sleep Tight*, works as a concierge in one of the posh areas of Barcelona. But César is far from being the ordinary man he seems, born as he was with a strange deficiency: he is simply incapable of being happy – unless, that is, he makes those around him unhappy, from which he draws the sustenance and motivation to carry on living. Young, successful professional Clara, one of the residents, is most definitely happy. So César's main target in life becomes “to erase that fucking perennial smile off her face”.

Familiar with all the comings and goings of every tenant, and master of all the keys, César puts in motion increasingly twisted machinations to bring Clara down – secretly adding homemade poison and tranquilisers to her creams, spending the night under her bed, followed by a cursory spell on top while she's asleep. But although this takes a visible toll on Clara's health, it doesn't seem to put a dent in her almost insanely positive attitude. And her boyfriend's surprise visit also threatens to ruin César's Machiavellian scheme.

The apartment block where the film is set is depicted as a giant beehive, Balagueró locating something genuinely uncanny in its labyrinthine corridors and stairs. Balagueró has of course already used similar spaces to explore how love of thy neighbour can shade into fear and worse, most shockingly in the hugely successful first instalment of the *[REC]* horror trilogy (co-directed by Paco Plaza). In fact, the original Spanish title of the film – *Mientras duermes* ('While You Are Asleep') – happens to be the name of the reality TV programme that brings Angela, the protagonist of *[REC]*, into a zombie-ridden building quite similar to the one here. Except that in *Sleep Tight*, Balagueró prefers to explore classic psychological thriller tropes, mining similar territory to Roman Polanski's



A spy in the house of love: Luis Tosar

creepy *The Tenant* and the numerous TV series and films – such as Alex de la Iglesia's *La comunidad* – that constitute a subgenre in Spain.

Here, the evil force is the concierge – familiar yet a stranger all at once – who works in plain sight, undermining the very sense of security and privacy that his presence bestows. As scripted by Alberto Marini, César is a sort of modern Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde meets the bogeyman, and is superbly underplayed by Tosar. Marini chooses not to explain the deep-seated resentment and bitterness that drive César, so the viewer knows him solely through his present actions. This maintains suspense throughout, since the point of view is always that of the perpetrator and not the victim (the reverse of the similar yet unengaging *The Resident*).

Tension builds through our being both repelled and intrigued by César. Hence the key to *Sleep Tight*'s undoubted success is the way it reins back the monstrosity to a human scale at all times and unlike *[REC]* keeps its thrills purposefully low-key. This means that the most offbeat moments in the film are the most horrific in their cruelty. When a goodhearted elderly spinster tenant comes to bid farewell to César, the latter's soft-spoken rejoinder is poisonous: “You are pathetic, because you are old and lonely.”

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Julio Fernández
Screenplay
Alberto Marini
Director of Photography
Pablo Rosso
Editor
Guillermo de La Cal
Art Director
Javier Alvario
Music
Lucas Vidal
Sound Designer
Oriol Tarragó
Costume Designer
Marian Coromina

©Mientras duermes, A.I.E./Castelao Pictures, S.L.
Production Companies
Filmmax Entertainment presents a Julio Fernández production for Castelao Pictures
A film by Jaume Balagueró
With the participation of TVE - Televisión Española, ONO, Canal+, TV3 - Televisió

de Catalunya
With the support of Instituto de la Cinematografía y de las Artes Audiovisuales
With the collaboration of Institut Català de les Indústries Culturals and Institut Català de Finances
Executive Producers
Julio Fernández
Carlos Fernández
Alberto Marini

Cast

Luis Tosar
César
Marta Etura
Clara
Alberto San Juan
Marcos
Petra Martínez
Señora Verónica
Iris Almeida Molina
Úrsula
Carlos Lasarte
neighbour in 4^B
Dolby Digital
In Colour

[1.85:1]
Subtitles

Distributor
Metrodome
Distribution Ltd

9,076 ft +8 frames

Spanish
theatrical title
Mientras duermes

Barcelona, the present. Affable middle-aged César is the concierge of a well-heeled apartment block where he is liked by all the tenants. But César has a strange condition: he is naturally unhappy and only feels at peace when inflicting pain on others. His latest victim is Clara, a happy-go-lucky young professional who lives in the building. Every day, César sneaks into her apartment and puts poison and tranquiliser in her creams and toothpaste. He then hides under her bed, waiting until she's asleep before lying next to her all night; he leaves the apartment in the morning before she wakes. Though Clara feels increasingly ill, her positive attitude shows no sign of abating. Úrsula, the teenage girl who lives opposite Clara, knows what's going on and blackmails César – she'll keep quiet if he pays her. César plans to kill Clara but she returns home with her boyfriend Marcos. César hides under the bed as the couple have sex, and manages to escape the next morning. Clara learns that she is two months pregnant, but she has been seeing Marcos for less than that. Marcos is suspicious of César and confronts him. César kills him and makes it look like suicide. Úrsula witnesses the murder but doesn't tell anyone after César threatens her. The police believe César's alibi involving the cleaner's son, but he still loses his job. A year later, Clara has had the baby; she receives a letter from César explaining that the child is his. She cries inconsolably.

Spike Island

United Kingdom 2012
Director: Mat Whitecross

Reviewed by Ryan Gilbey

The Madchester music scene produced bands and fans shaggy of hair, baggy of clothes and laddish in nature (even the female ones). The atmosphere was characterised by the mateyness of the football stand, chemically charged by ecstasy – as befitted a sound with one foot in rock stadium and one in discotheque. Madchester was distinct from both the studied griminess of US grunge (Nirvana, Soundgarden) and the feyness of some of the Britpop outfits on the horizon (Suede, Pulp). Key Madchester bands included Happy Mondays (whose 1988 second album, *Bummed*, showcased their love of the 1970 Nicolas Roeg/Donald Cammell film *Performance*) and Inspiral Carpets (who counted future Oasis founder Noel Gallagher as a roadie). Looming largest were The Stone Roses, whose eponymous 1989 debut album featured Pollockesque cover art by the guitarist John Squires and loose, roomy tracks such as 'I Wanna Be Adored' and 'I Am the Resurrection'. The album was so intoxicating, and the band's image so inclusive, that it seemed briefly that they could get away with anything, even a perverse failure to reproduce that magic on stage: a mere ten seconds of live singing by their frontman Ian Brown could force one to revise upwards even the lowest musical opinion of Linda McCartney.

A poorly managed and technically lacklustre show on the Mersey Estuary in Widnes provides the backdrop, climax and title for *Spike Island*, the second feature by the British director Mat Whitecross. This straightforward film is less reliant on formalist mischief than Whitecross's 2010 non-documentary debut, the Ian Dury biopic *Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll*, which he made after co-directing with Michael Winterbottom *The Road to Guantánamo* (2006) and *The Shock Doctrine* (2009). The focus is on a group of five Mancunian pals of 16 or 17, the effect on their lives of The Stone Roses, and their determination to attend the Spike Island gig despite not having tickets.

The friends' leader, Tits (Elliott Tittensor, the pinch-faced cherub who was a regular on Paul Abbott's Channel 4 series *Shameless*), has a gravely ill father, a miscreant brother missing presumed clubbing in Ibiza, and a crush on local girl Sally, who will also be at Spike Island. But Tits's best friend and bandmate in Roses-copyists Shadowcaster has also been making goo-goo eyes at Sally. That these and other assorted conflicts laid out in the first half are checked off routinely in the second is no bad thing. Nor is the boys' larky approach to their various obstacles: trying to tempt a slacker out of his van so that they might steal it, they use the *E.T.* method of scattering a treasure-trail on the ground, though in this case it's not gaily coloured Reese's Pieces but cider, weed and Rizlas that do the trick.

Character names (Keith Teeth, Uncle Hair) suggest castoffs from Happy Mondays songs, while the script by the actor Chris Coghill (who plays the man lured from his van) has some juicy lines that remain vaguely intelligible amid the verbal Mancunian thicket. Pondering the name of Shadowcaster's rivals, The Palaver, one lad wonders: “Who names their band after a fruit meringue?” It adds up to a breezy but



Taking the stage: Elliott Tittensor, Emilia Clarke

unexceptional watch – the cinematic equivalent of a nicely observed young adult novel, whereas the US equivalent might have been something transformative like *Dazed and Confused* (1993) or *The Myth of the American Sleepover* (2010). **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Fiona Neilson
Esther Douglas
Written by
Chris Coghill
Director of
Photography
Christopher Ross
Editor
Peter Christelis
Production
Designer
Richard Bullock
Original Music
Tim Wheeler
Ilan Eshkeri
Sound Recorder
Stevie Haywood
Costume Designer
Liza Bracey

©The British Film
Institute/Made of
Stone Films Ltd
Production
Companies
BFI and Head Gear
Films present in
association with
Metrol Technology,
Rising Star Media
and BBC Films a

Fiesta production
in association
with Revolver
Entertainment
Made in association
with Head Gear
Films and Metrol
Technology
Made with the
support of the
BFI's Film Fund and
UK Film Council's
Development Fund
Executive
Producers
Phil Hunt
Adam Kulick
Joe Oppenheimer
Compton Ross
Guy Berryman
Jonny Buckland
Will Champion
Chris Martin

Cast
Elliott Tittensor
Tits
Emilia Clarke
Sally
Nico Mirallegro
Dodge

Jordan Murphy
Zippy
Adam Long
Little Gaz
Oliver Heald
Penfold
Matthew McNulty
Ibiza Ste
Steve Evets
Eric
Chris Coghill
Uncle Hairy
Jodie Whittaker
Suzanne
Antonio Thomas
Lisa
Michael Socha
Carl

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Revolver
Entertainment

Manchester, May 1990. Three days before The Stone Roses are to play at Spike Island in Widnes, five schoolfriends, including Tits and Dodge, are still ticketless. They hope to pass a demo tape of their own band, Shadowcaster, to The Stone Roses. Both Tits and Dodge harbour feelings for Sally, who will also be at the gig. When their contact fails to come through with tickets, Tits's brother Ibiza Ste promises to get them on the guest list. The night before the show, Tits is called to the hospital to visit his father, who is dying of cancer. The next morning, his father urges him to attend the gig. The friends reach Widnes via a stolen van, which breaks down, then by stowing away in the luggage hold of a coach. Denied access to the show, they convene in an adjacent field with Sally. Back home, Tits discovers that Ibiza Ste had the tickets all along. Tits and Sally sleep together. Tits goes to the hospital to find that his father has died. Dodge plays guitar at the wake. With Tits's blessing, Dodge goes on tour with rival band The Palaver.

Stolen

USA 2012
Director: Simon West
Certificate 12A 95m 46s



To catch a thief: Nicolas Cage

Reviewed by Vadim Rizov

"It's too easy," FBI investigator Tim Harlend (Danny Huston) muses, watching Will Montgomery (Nicolas Cage) and gang staging a jewel heist. "This crew doesn't do too easy." Predictably, this reunion of *Con Air* director Simon West and his down-and-out star undermines Huston's words.

Having served an eight-year jail sentence for a failed heist, Will makes an intrusive pest of himself with estranged daughter Alison (Sami Gayle), introduced on her way to therapy to discuss her absent-father issues. Like Liam Neeson in *Taken* (2008), Will has a chance to

make good by rescuing Alison when she's kidnapped by his psychotic ex-partner Vincent (Josh Lucas), who shot himself in the foot while being dragged away by Will from a witness he wanted to kill. Vincent blames Will for his right leg's amputation. "I was a golden boy, dollface," he screams at Alison. "Now I'm a freakin' Picasso!"

For much of Mardi Gras, Cage runs around New Orleans in search of his daughter, who is stashed in the trunk of Vincent's cab. Anyone tired of 'chaos cinema' may be soothed by West's excessive coverage, which breaks a simple action – a car driving across the central reservation, say – into parodically thorough detail. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
René Besson
Jesse Kennedy
Matthew Joynes
Written by
David Guggenheim
Director of
Photography
James Whitaker
Edited by
Glenn Scantlebury
Production Designer
Jaymes Hinkle

Music
Mark Isham
Sound Mixer
Jay Meagher
Costume Designer
Christopher Lawrence
Stunt Co-ordinator
Noon Orsatti

©Medal
Productions, Inc.
Production
Companies

Millennium Films
presents a Nu
Image production
in association with
Saturn Films
A film by Simon West
Executive Producers
Joseph McGinty
[i.e. McG]
Mary Viola
Boaz Davidson
John Thompson
Avi Lerner

Danny Dimbort
Trevor Short
Kristina Dubin
Jib Polhemus
Cassian Elwes

Cast
Nicolas Cage
Will Montgomery
Danny Huston
Tim Harlend

Malin Akerman
Riley Jeffers
M.C. Gainey
Hoyt
Sami Gayle
Alison Loeb
Mark Valley
Fletcher
Josh Lucas
Vincent
Edrick Browne
Jacobs

Barry Shabaka
Henley
Reginald

Dolby Digital/DTs
In Colour
2.35:1 [Super 35]

Distributor
Lionsgate UK
8,619 ft +0 frames

New Orleans, eight years ago. When a heist goes awry, thief Will Montgomery is abandoned by his partners; he burns \$10 million in cash to ensure a lesser sentence.

When Will is released from prison eight years later, his estranged daughter Alison is kidnapped by his former partner Vincent. During the earlier robbery,

Vincent shot himself in the foot when Will dragged him away from a witness he was trying to kill – and he blames Will for the subsequent amputation of his leg. In exchange for Alison, he demands \$10 million. With help from former partner Riley, Will steals that sum in gold. During their exchange, Will saves his daughter and Vincent is killed.

Thursday till Sunday

Chile/The Netherlands/France/Spain/Argentina 2012
Director: Dominga Sotomayor

Reviewed by Hannah McGill

See Feature
on page 46

The cosy torpor of a long family car journey, and the gap that yawns between a child's dawning emotional awareness and the true complexities of adult entanglements:

both are evoked with precision and aching empathy in Dominga Sotomayor's feature debut. Perhaps inevitably, since it primarily occupies a frustrated perspective – that of pubescent Lucía, who's old enough to pick up on sexual and emotional currents but too young to demand or confidently guess at their explanations – it's also a somewhat frustrating watch. Scenes are slow, exhaustively detailed and non-judgementally attentive to behaviour that's frequently far from reasonable. And those alert to arthouse cliché may identify it in the drifts pace, the child's-eye viewpoint and the theme of bourgeois concealment of secrets and lies. But Sotomayor's confident direction of her extremely accomplished young cast – Santi Ahumada as Lucía and Emiliano Freifeld as little brother Manuel are particularly striking – and her skilled management both of screen time and of the flow of plot information draw added value from what might have seemed like an overextended short-film subject.

The passivity of children within a shifting family set-up is foregrounded from the film's opening, in which a child's sleepy body is transported into a car ahead of a holiday trip from the home in Santiago to a campsite in the wilder reaches of northern Chile. Off-camera, young mother Ana (Paola Giannini) asks, "Are you sure you want me to go?" "We already talked about it," responds her husband Fernando (Francisco Pérez-Bannen). It's the first of a succession of passive-aggressive exchanges that will leave the audience to draw its own conclusions regarding who exactly is leaving whom. The insecure position in which her parents' fracturing relationship – and her own hormonally unsettled stage of life – leaves Lucía is neatly evoked through several instances of sudden, disorienting solitude. When the family stops at a roadside café and Lucía loses sight of the rest of them, Bárbara Álvarez's stalking camera captures her in a state of confusion that's laced with just a little exhilaration: she's just at the age of realising that one day she'll have no choice but to exist independently of their care. This not-too-distant future prospect is incarnated soon afterwards in the appealingly unkempt form of two female hitchhikers, 18 and 19 years old. Fernando picks them up to antagonise Ana, who has piqued his jealousy by excitedly arranging to meet her old friend Juan during the trip; but to Lucía, they are emblems of a freedom she can just barely envisage.

She's not the only one with dreams of carefree independence. Both Fernando and Ana, neither of whom is far past 30, fixate on their youth, and don't hide from their children their bitterness at its loss. Fernando refers repeatedly to rebellious episodes from his past, and attempts to recreate one when he pinches some fruit that's dropped over the outside wall of an orchard. (He gets shot at for his trouble, but




A bad trip: Santi Ahumada

the glamour drains out of his adventure when Ana pronounces his booty "hard as rock".) Ana, meanwhile, does her bit to introduce Lucía to female self-criticism when she pulls back the skin on her face and tells the young girl, "This is how I should be... like you... beautiful."

Ana's looks clearly aren't a problem for the aforementioned Juan, whose arrival on the scene further activates Fernando's inner teenage boy: wherever Juan might claim or assume superiority, Fernando is quick to compete. Whether Ana and Juan are physically involved is left ambiguous, but from their easy physical intimacy the watchful Lucía deduces the coming demise of her parents' marriage – which growing certainty confuses the issue of Ana slipping out of the children's tent in dead of night in order to make love to Fernando. Do the marauding pigs that invade the campsite the following morning (while she dreams of being forced into a horrible

choice) represent Lucía's impressions of greedy, undignified grown-up sexuality? Whether or not one regards the film's take on the trappings of adulthood as quite *that* negative, certainly the only character who seems free of regrets, painful suspicions and fantasies of escape is Manuel, a boy so guileless that he begs Lucía for a favourite game in which he gets to play her "slave", and sweetly contends, when his father is trying to coax Ana out of a nocturnal tantrum and back into the car, "She doesn't want to."

The fact that growing up entirely desimplifies the matter of wanting – that motivations here are constantly split and doubled – is reflected in remarkable camerawork by Álvarez. Regular cameraperson to Lucrecia Martel, she works here on lushly expressive Super 16, and habitually contains multiple points of action in one frame, offering the audience layers of activity to observe even as the dialogue gives little away. 

Credits and Synopsis

Producers

Gregorio González
Benjamín Domenech

Written by

Dominga Sotomayor

Director of

Photography

Barbara Álvarez

Editors

Danielle Filios

Catalina Marín

Production Designer

Estefanía Larraín

Sound Design

Roberto Espinoza

Costume Designer

Juana Díaz

@[no company given]

Production

Companies

A Forastero,

Cinestación

production in

co-production

with Circe Films

In association with

Triciclo Films

Produced with

the support of

Cinefondation

Residence - Festival

de Cannes,

Hubert Bals

Fund/Rotterdam

International Film

Festival, Netherlands

Film Fund, Consejo de

la Cultura y las Artes

- Fondo de Fomento

Audiovisual, Corfo,

Ibermedia and the

support of Australab

- FICV, Buenos

Aires Lab - BAFICI,

Fundación Typa

Cast

Francisco

Pérez-Bannen

Papa

Paola Giannini

Ana

Santi Ahumada

Lucía

Emiliano Freifeld

Manuel

Axel Dupré

José

Jorge Becker

Jorge

In Colour

[1.85:1]

Subtitles

Distributor

Day for Night

Chilean theatrical title

De jueves a domingo

Onscreen English

subtitle

Thursday through

Sunday

Santiago, Chile, the present. Troubled couple Fernando and Ana take their children, Lucía and Manuel, on a long car journey to a campsite in the north. On the way, Ana arranges to meet up with her old friend Juan and his son Jorge. The family also encounter a young man travelling alone on a motorcycle. Permitted the thrill of riding on the roof, Manuel and Lucía watch their parents bickering through the windscreen. At the campsite, Fernando competes with Juan, and Lucía notices her parents' ambiguous exchanges and her mother's closeness with Juan. Lucía hears lovemaking in the night. In the morning the campsite is overrun with wild pigs. Lucía fantasises about being free: to learn to drive, to build a house in the country, to fly like a bird. She has a frightening dream about being forced to choose the manner of her own death. On the way home, they hear on the radio that the young motorcyclist has been found dead. Fernando tells Ana that he will rent a separate apartment. Accusing him of already having done so, she walks off into the desert by herself. The family don't find her until after dark. In the morning, though a fragile unit, they are still together.

Trance

USA/United Kingdom/Australia 2013
Director: Danny Boyle
Certificate 15 101m 17s

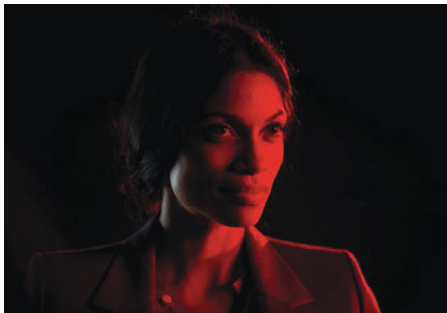
Reviewed by Kim Newman

See Feature
on page 60

Based on a 2001 TV movie written and directed by small-screen genre specialist Joe Ahearne (*Ultraviolet*, *Doctor Who*), Danny Boyle's *Trance* is as much a throwback

to the days of tricky heist movies as the recent more laidback *Gambit*. An illustrated lecture on art theft and the security measures taken to prevent it – which are then deftly sidestepped by flamboyant, cool thieves – establishes a world of fabulously valuable prizes that can never be displayed, characters who have modish apartments (and neuroses), and a clean, crisp, fantasy London removed from the grittier Scottish settings of Boyle's earlier ventures into crime and betrayal.

There is a line between the Boyle of *Shallow Grave* (1994) and *Trainspotting* (1996) and *Trance*, not least in the return of his screenwriter collaborator John Hodge and the way James McAvoy's protagonist Simon sounds like the young Ewan McGregor, down to the hollow smarm and incipient homicidal mania. In a tightly plotted, treacherous tale, there's room only for three substantial players and it's a triangle of deception in which the most obviously devious character – Vincent Cassel's French thief – actually has the least to hide as the film keeps rolling back to reveal that what we took for plot-advancing scenes were just fantasies, and that key sequences have been edited to make room for later revelations in ellipses Boyle is canny enough to stage without apparent effort. Still, there are warning bells – Simon's unnecessary use of a stun gun during a robbery he isn't actually trying to stop, his random selection of a hypnotherapist and her scalpel-sharp dissection of his cover story after



Brainspotting: Rosario Dawson

he turns up claiming to be searching for his lost car keys when he's really after a missing Goya.

Rosario Dawson plays the femme semi-fatale like the therapists or lawyers in those glossy padded-shoulder slasher movies of the 80s and 90s (*Jagged Edge*, *Whispers in the Dark*), with a few kinks such as popping into the bathroom to shave her pubes in order to cater to her bipolar patient's Barbie-doll fetish. Boyle gives her the full glamour treatment, though he doesn't skimp on exposing McAvoy and Cassel, but the way all the characters hold back vital information prevents involvement with them, making them puppets or spectres – so that the only life in the film comes from its one random element, the doomed innocent (Tuppence Middleton) who keeps being written over in the memory sequences. Like all mysteries that depend on 180-degree twists, *Trance* risks being surprising but not satisfying – it has the feel of a super-produced TV movie, and though it dazzles while it's running, it self-destructs soon after. Ironically, its viewers are likely to suffer the same memory lapses as its protagonist – unable to sort out what has really happened, but not motivated enough to go through it again for the answers. Ⓜ

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Christian Colson
Screenplay
Joe Ahearne
John Hodge
Story
Joe Ahearne
Director of Photography
Anthony Dod Mantle
Editor
Jon Harris
Production Designer
Mark Tildesley
Music
Rick Smith
Production Sound Mixer

Simon Hayes
Costume Designer
Suttirat Larlarb
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Company, Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, Pathé Productions Limited, Indian Paintbrush Productions LLC and TSG Entertainment Finance LLC (in Brazil, Italy, Japan, Korea and Spain)
Production Companies
Pathé, Fox Searchlight Pictures and Film4 present a Cloud Eight/Decibel Films production
A Danny Boyle film

Made in association with TSG Entertainment, Ingenious Media and Indian Paintbrush
Produced in association with Big Screen Productions, Down Productions and Ingenious Film Partners
Executive Producers
Steven Rales
Mark Roybal
Bernard Bellew
François Ivernel
Cameron McCracken
Tessa Ross

Cast
James McAvoy
Simon
Vincent Cassel
Franck
Rosario Dawson
Elizabeth
Danny Sapani
Nate
Matt Cross
Dominic
Wahab Sheikh
Riz
Mark Poltimore
Francis Lemaître
Tuppence Middleton
young woman
in red car

Simon Kunz
surgeon

**Dolby Atmos/
Datasat/SDDS
In Colour**
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Pathé Productions
9,115 ft +8 frames

London. Compulsive gambler Simon tries to pay off a debt by acting as inside man for the heist of a Goya painting from the high-end auction house where he works. However, during the robbery he takes the painting himself, leaving master thief Franck with only the frame. Simon escapes from the scene of the crime but is involved in a minor road accident; he loses his memory and is unable to remember where the painting is hidden.

Franck and his minions try to torture Simon for the information but still he can't remember – so he is persuaded to take a course of hypnotherapy with Dr Elizabeth Lamb. He poses as someone who has lost his car keys, but Elizabeth sees through

the imposture, discovers what is really going on and seems to cut herself in on the robbery proceeds, while also beginning a relationship with Franck. Under hypnosis, Simon uncovers memories of a woman driving a red car. He tries to stay ahead of the game by plotting to kill the rest of the gang – a fantasy that Elizabeth encourages him to act out. Simon eventually remembers that the painting is in the boot of the red car, which also contains the corpse of the woman (whom he strangled), in an underground car park. Elizabeth reveals that she always knew who Simon was, having once had a relationship with him which she erased from his mind to escape. Elizabeth exploits the situation to best both Simon and Franck.

Warm Bodies

USA 2013
Director: Jonathan Levine
Certificate 12A 97m 38s

Reviewed by Hannah McGill

Despite its dramatis personae of zombies, zombie hunters and killer skeletons, *Warm Bodies* is less an ironic indulgence for horror fans than a post-feminist romance in which the ever-versatile undead provide a neat emblem for male ineffectuality. Many of the jokes in the film's gently pleasurable voiceover – which offers lead actor Nicholas Hoult the chance to speak even as his onscreen character largely grunts – work by applying standard self-critiques of the hapless young male to the condition of zombiedom.

"I'm so pale," muses R, dead some eight years. "I should stand up straight... Why do I have to be so weird?" Smitten with living human Julie (Teresa Palmer), he lumbers towards her, inwardly cautioning himself, "Don't be creepy..." Later, rather than Julie following romcom convention by doing herself up to please the new man in her life, R submits to a makeover from Julie and her best friend; having masked his pallor with makeup, the girls tell him, "You look hot."

The unambiguous likeability and sexual passivity of R, plus the cursory, goreless manner in which the few scenes of actual peril are handled, drop the stakes pretty low in *Warm Bodies* – not surprisingly, perhaps, given its origins in a teen-oriented novel by Isaac Marion and the redemptive fuzziness of writer-director Jonathan Levine's previous rites-of-passage flicks *The Wackness* (2008) and *50/50* (2011). A greater threat is posed by seen-it-all teen cynicism than by zombie brain-munching: just after losing her boyfriend, Julie explains her froideur with the words, "In my world, people die all the time." That R has the requisite authenticity to challenge her jadedness is indicated by his fondness for obsolete music and technology; he prefers vinyl records, on the basis that they sound "more alive".

Nostalgia proves to be an adaptable quantity: syrupy poodle-rock power ballads, a snow globe and a trashy 80s Polaroid camera are among the throwaway artefacts R has shored up against apocalyptic decay. But perhaps this acknowledgment of the fine line between trash and treasure is part of the film's stubbornly optimistic credo. Its investment in the power of love



Romance is dead: Nicholas Hoult, Teresa Palmer

means that it must offer counters to the bitter assertion of Julie's father, on being told of the zombies' recovery, that "things don't get better. They get worse."

Perhaps acknowledging a more recent and direct source of nostalgia, Levine has allowed a couple of direct lifts from *Shaun of the Dead* (2004): pre-apocalypse city-dwellers behaving indistinguishably from zombies; a 'warm-bodied' human practising Halloween-party zombie moves in order to pass unnoticed amid the undead. And despite the nod to Shakespeare in Julie and R's names, *Romeo and Juliet* references are pretty much restricted to a single balcony shot – a far more rigorous zombification of that text was undertaken in Ryan Denmark's comic schlock delight *Romeo & Juliet vs. the Living Dead* (2009). Zombies here neither shock nor subvert; rather they function not unlike the memory-wiping fantasy technology deployed by Michel Gondry and Charlie Kaufman in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004), as a conceit that permits the evasion of a standard romcom narrative while supporting a high level of starry-eyed romanticism. **S**

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Bruna Papandrea
David Hoberman
Todd Lieberman
Screenplay
Jonathan Levine
Based on the novel
by Isaac Marion
Director of Photography
Javier Aguirresarobe
Editor
Nancy Richardson
Production Designer
Laurie Webb
Music
Marco Beltrami
Buck Sanders
Production Sound Recorder
Louis Marion
Costume Designer

George L. Little
@Summit
Entertainment, LLC.
Production Companies
Summit
Entertainment
presents a Make
Movies/Mandeville
Pictures production
Executive Producers
Laurie Webb
Cory Shepherd Stern
Nicolas Stern

Cast
Nicholas Hoult
R
Teresa Palmer
Julie

Rob Corddry
M
Dave Franco
Perry
Analeigh Tipton
Nora
Cory Hardict
Kevin
John Malkovich
Grigio

Dolby Digital/ Datasat
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
EI Films

8,787 ft +0 frames

America, the near future. Eight years after an unspecified catastrophe, society is split into three groups: living humans, who are confined behind a protective wall; flesh-eating zombies, who invade occasionally; and roaming 'bonies', zombies who have degenerated into murderous skeletons. During a brawl, zombie R impulsively saves human Julie, after killing and eating her boyfriend Perry. He takes her back to his hideout in a disused airport, where they become friends. R starts to regain his memories and his ability to speak and dream; other zombies experience the same phenomena. The bonies remain bloodthirsty, as does the zombie-hunting militia commanded by Julie's father General Grigio. Julie and R hide out in a vacated suburban house, but when R reveals to Julie that he killed Perry, she leaves and returns to the city. R follows her and they reconcile. Julie and her friend Nora disguise R as a human; the three visit General Grigio to explain that the zombies are changing, but he will not accept it. R and Julie flee again. Humans and newly sensitive zombies begin to collaborate against bonies, but Grigio's men still corner and shoot R. He bleeds, thus proving that he has become human again, and Grigio calls off his men.

In voiceover R reports that the humans and zombies united to destroy all the bonies. Happily together, R and Julie watch the wall fall.

Welcome to the Punch

United Kingdom 2012

Director: Eran Creevy

Certificate 15 99m 36s

Reviewed by Catherine Wheatley

The opening scenes of *Welcome to the Punch* are a snarling statement of intent. Cars and motorcycles roar through the blinking lights and stark lines of a night-time Canary Wharf. The editing is fast and disorienting, awash with close-ups of steel, chrome and spinning wheels. There's a frantic fight, a brutal shooting – and finally a cut to a cold, glittering City skyscape.

Detective Max Lewinsky is left with a shattered knee, from which he draws fluid with a syringe every morning. A scarred antihero in the mould of *Blade Runner's* Rick Deckard, Lewinsky is obsessed with dealing out justice to Jacob Sternwood, the criminal who inflicted the wound. And sure enough, his chance arises when three years later Sternwood returns to London to see his son – hospitalised after being shot in the stomach by an unknown assailant. But director Eran Creevy steers away from a straightforward revenge narrative, swerving into the territory occupied by Michael Mann's *Heat* (1995) and Andrew Lau and Alan Mak's *Infernal Affairs* (2002), as the lines between cop and robber blur and corruption seeps through the city.

Both Lewinsky and his quarry are intricately entwined with London. Through them, we see two sides of the city: the sleek plate-glass spaces of pseudo-transparency which house bankers, businessmen and politicians; and the shady bunkers where the would-be respectable literally store their dirty secrets. London has never looked so slickly futuristic: glittery and gorgeous and grimy and grim all at once. Much of the credit for this neo-noir aesthetic must go to production designer Crispian Sallis, a regular collaborator of the Scott brothers, having worked on *Revenge* (1990) with Tony and *Gladiator* (2000)

Credits and Synopsis

Produced by
Rory Aitken
Ben Pugh
Brian Kavanaugh-Jones
Written by
Eran Creevy
Director of Photography
Ed Wild
Editing
Chris Gill
Production Designer
Crispian Sallis
Music
Harry Escott
Production Sound Mixer
Colin Nicolson
Costume Designer
Natalie Ward
Stunt Co-ordinator
Dickey Beer

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Production Companies
Worldview
Entertainment and BFI present
IM Global and Alliance
Films present
In association with
Quicktime Films
a Between the Eyes
and Automatik
production
A Scott Free
production

A film by Eran Creevy
Developed in association with
Orlando Wood
and Magic Hour
Entertainment
Made with the support of the
National Lottery
through the British
Film Institute's
Film Fund
Executive Producers
Christopher Woodrow
Molly Connors
Stuart Ford
Xavier Marchand
Jan Pace
Ridley Scott
Liza Marshall
Maria Cestone
Sarah Johnson
Redlich
James Atherton

Cast

James McAvo
Max Lewinsky
Mark Strong
Jacob Sternwood
Andrea Riseborough
Sarah Hawks
Peter Mullen
Roy Edwards
Johnny Harris
Dean Warns
Daniel Mays
Nathan Bartnick
David Morrissey

Thomas Geiger
Natasha Little
Jane Badham
Daniel Kaluuya
Juka Ogadawa
Ruth Sheen
Iris Warns
Jason Fleming
Harvey Crown
Elyes Gabel
Ruan Sternwood

Dolby Digital
In Colour
[2.35:1]

Distributor
Momentum Pictures

8,964 ft +0 frames



Heat is on: Mark Strong

and *Hannibal* (2001) with Ridley. As executive producer, the latter has also had a hand in shaping the film – with, one suspects, less than fortuitous results. Creevy's 2008 debut *Shift* was rightly praised for its nuanced plotting and the chemistry of its leads. There, Creevy gave his characters room to breathe; here, they are smothered, choked, by the shotgun crack of the drama, the convoluted plotting and some rather overzealous editing. Gaps open up in the narrative which are left yawning, while excellent actors such as Daniel Mays and Andrea Riseborough are given frustratingly little to do before being summarily dispatched.

This is precisely the kind of schematism that felled Scott's *Prometheus* (2012). It's hard to shake the feeling that Scott has streamlined Creevy's original screenplay into a more overtly accessible form and turned it into a beautiful but bland piece of genre filmmaking. Creevy would have been better served to stick to what he does best – or at the very least, to look to the rough-edged character of *Alien* (1979) as inspiration. He's still one to watch, but *Welcome to the Punch* won't be the film that makes Creevy's name. **S**

London, the present. Three years ago, detective Max Lewinsky was shot and injured by master criminal Jacob Sternwood during an attempted arrest. Sternwood fled the country, leaving Lewinsky obsessed with revenge. Now Sternwood's son Ruan has been hospitalised with a bullet wound, and Sternwood is back. Sternwood traces his son's past movements to a hotel, where he finds a stash of cash. Hoping to flush out his son's assailant, he lays a trap. Investigating in the aftermath, Lewinsky realises that his colleague Nathan Bartnick was at the hotel. He informs his boss, Thomas Geiger. Lewinsky's partner Sarah Hawks tails Dean Warns, the man suspected of shooting Ruan, to a storage facility where she discovers an arms cache in container PUNCH 119. Warns murders her and deposits the body in Lewinsky's flat.

Having figured out that Bartnick shot his son, Sternwood arranges a meeting with him in an abandoned nightclub. Geiger, who has tapped Bartnick's phone, sends Lewinsky along. In the resulting shootout, Sternwood and Lewinsky join forces against Bartnick and Warns. They escape and flee to the hospital, where they discover that Ruan has died. Lewinsky (framed for Hawks's murder) and Sternwood blackmail Warns into arranging a meeting at the storage facility with his boss – who turns out to be Geiger. Geiger reveals that Ruan's death was the result of a botched set-up: he had been working with politician Robert Wiseman to create a moral panic around gun crime, thereby assuring Wiseman's zero-tolerance policies would win him the next election. During a standoff, Sternwood shoots Geiger but is himself hurt. Lewinsky lets him escape, turning to face the approaching back-up squad alone.

4TH RENDEZ-VOUS
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APRIL 4-7, 2013
CURZON SOHO - CINÉ LUMIÈRE



SCREENINGS ARE FOLLOWED BY Q&AS WITH DIRECTORS AND ACTORS

thursday
4 april

5.00PM CINÉ LUMIÈRE
Exclusive on-stage interview
with Kristin Scott Thomas

6.15PM CURZON SOHO
Populaire
Q&A with Régis Roinsard (director),
Déborah François and Romain Duris (actors)

friday
5 april

6.15PM CURZON SOHO
Thérèse Desqueyroux
Q&A with Audrey Tautou (actress)

8.15PM CINÉ LUMIÈRE
Populaire
Q&A with Régis Roinsard (director),
Déborah François and Romain Duris (actors)

saturday
6 april

6.00PM CURZON SOHO
Renoir
Q&A with Gilles Bourdos (director) and Christa Théret (actress)

6.15PM CINÉ LUMIÈRE
Cycling with Molière
Q&A with Philippe Le Guay (director)

sunday
7 april

3.00PM CURZON SOHO
Zarafa
Q&A with Rémi Bezançon (director)

6.00PM CURZON SOHO
Our Children
Q&A with Joachim Lafosse (director)

6.15PM CINÉ LUMIÈRE
Renoir
Q&A with Gilles Bourdos (director) and Christa Théret (actress)

Home cinema



Beauty and the beastly: Barbara Steele as Princess Asa in Mario Bava's debut feature 'Black Sunday'

SATANIC MAJESTIES

Italian horror maestro Mario Bava was the 'romantic craftsman' who pioneered a chiller cinema of sophisticated scares

FILMS BY MARIO BAVA

BLACK SUNDAY

Italy 1960; Arrow Video/Region B Blu-ray and Region 2 DVD Dual Format; Certificate 15; 96 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.66:1; Features: audio commentary, 'The Mask of Satan' alternate version, booklet, trailers, interview with Mark Damon, introduction by Alan Jones, TV and radio spots, 'I vampiri' (1956)

LISA AND THE DEVIL

Italy/West Germany/Spain 1972; Arrow Video/Region B Blu-ray and Region 2 DVD Dual Format; Certificate 18; 95 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.77:1; Features: 'The House of Exorcism' alternate version, introduction by Alan Jones, audio commentaries, trailers, 'The Exorcism of Lisa'

Reviewed by James Blackford

The often imaginative and stylistically rich world of Italian horror has been enjoying a critical and popular renaissance in recent years, with several marginalised directors of the 1960s and 70s receiving the recognition once only

afforded their art-cinema compatriots. One case in point is the pioneering gothic horror and giallo specialist Mario Bava (1914-1980). A quiet, reserved man who self-effacingly referred to himself as a mere "romantic craftsman", Bava made a string of low-budget but nevertheless literate and aesthetically sophisticated horror and thriller B-movies in the 60s and 70s. With his monochrome debut *Black Sunday* (*La maschera del demonio*, 1960) and the murder mystery *Blood and Black Lace* (*Sei donne per l'assassino*, 1964), Bava defined the character and style of the Italian horror and giallo genres respectively. Other notable works include the gloriously florid colour movies *The Whip and the Body* (*La frusta e il corpo*, 1963), *Kill, Baby... Kill!* (*Operazione paura*, 1966) and the portmanteau film *Black Sabbath* (*I tre volti della paura*, 1963), starring Boris Karloff. Emulated en masse by his Cinecittà contemporaries, Bava's films also influenced American filmmakers working in the gothic horror and slasher genres.

After enjoying healthy exposure on DVD over the past ten years, it is against a backdrop of critical reappraisal and ever-growing fan adoration that all Bava's theatrically distributed films come to Blu-ray for the first time, through

Redemption Films in North America and Arrow Video in the UK. Arrow has kicked off its series with superbly comprehensive releases of two of Bava's gothic films – the aforementioned *Black Sunday* and one of the director's last films in this vein, *Lisa and the Devil* (1972). It's an interesting pairing in that the two films bookend Bava's work within the gothic horror field and represent markedly different approaches to the subgenre.

Black Sunday was Bava's first film as director. Following in his father Eugenio Bava's footsteps he'd worked as a cameraman throughout the 30s and 40s and by the mid-50s had found himself completing several pictures for Galatea Film, including Riccardo Freda's *I vampiri* (1956), considered the first Italian horror film (it is generously included on Arrow's *Black Sunday* Blu-ray edition). By way of saying thank you, Lionello Santi, head of Galatea, invited Bava to make his directorial debut, affording him the freedom to choose whatever genre he wanted (so long as it didn't cost too much). Bava chose horror and Nikolai Gogol's gothic fairytale *Viy* as his source material.

Black Sunday wound up bearing little resemblance to its Slavonic literary forebear

save for its Carpathian locale and period setting. It opens with a prologue set in 17th-century Moldavia, where the beautiful Princess Asa (British actress Barbara Steele, in a career-defining role) is put to death along with her lover Igor Javutich (Arturo Dominici) for consorting with the devil. The mode of execution ordered by the Grand Inquisitor, Asa's brother Prince Vajda (Ivo Garrani), is particularly grisly – a spiked mask is to be hammered down on Asa's face – but before she is put to death the doomed princess swears revenge on her enemies, in the name of Satan. Two hundred years later, doctors Kruvajan (Andrea Checchi) and Gorobek (John Richardson) stumble across Asa's tomb; while exploring the ruins of her resting place, Kruvajan cuts himself and unwittingly drips blood on to the corpse. Asa and her fiendish lover Javutich are consequently resurrected and set about vengefully possessing the witch's beautiful descendant Katia (also played by Steele).

Italian horror cinema is known for its intense atmosphere, extravagant visual style and gory scenes, and *Black Sunday* is the film that first pioneered this approach. A supremely visual experience, Bava's style is an extension of the gothic aesthetic pioneered by Universal's horror films of the 1930s. The beautifully composed chiaroscuro cinematography, expressionistic set design and art direction and the grotesquely appealing makeup lend the film a distinct atmosphere; this is cinema at its most grandiose and rich, brimful of high-flown imagery. Bava filmed almost all the exteriors on a stage at Titanus Studios in Rome so that he could exert complete control over the supposed natural environment he was creating. The result is a convincingly eerie and archaic world: a terrifying, foggy nightmare realm of castles, boggy marshes and ancient forests through which Bava's camera slowly prowls.

The story unfolds in a rather perfunctory manner and, as is usual with Italian genre films, the dialogue is post-synched, hampering the actors' performances, but Bava punctuates the narrative with lyrical and sometimes disturbing set pieces which set the film alight. These highlights include the bravura opening scene in which Asa is put to death; a rapidly edited bat attack; Javutich clawing himself out of his muddy grave (which makes terrifying use of thunderclaps and Dutch angles); and the ghostly slow-motion sequence of a phantom carriage coursing down a forest path.

Black Sunday's aesthetics are resolutely old-fashioned, but the film merges this approach with a strikingly modern depiction of violence. Taking his cue from the risqué horror fare that Hammer had been producing in the late 50s, Bava employs several grisly shocks, including a disturbing scene of eye-violence that pre-empt the assaultive cinema of fellow Italian horror director Lucio Fulci. Another groundbreaking aspect is the film's intertwining of sexual attraction and horror. Barbara Steele's disfigured witch Asa



Sommer and Savalas in 'Lisa and the Devil'

is undoubtedly the film's monster, but Bava depicts her as morbidly beautiful, her heaving bosom and clawing hands signifying her as a representation of unbridled female sexual desire, simultaneously repellent and attractive.

Made for a modest budget of around \$100,000, *Black Sunday* grossed millions worldwide, propelling Steele to international stardom and ushering in a craze for copycat Italian chillers. However, by 1973, when Bava came to direct his latter-day masterpiece *Lisa and the Devil*, the gothic had become unfashionable, with Italian audiences now in thrall to the metropolitan thrills of the *giallo* horror/mystery subgenre (which Bava also pioneered) and international audiences flocking to the modern-day horrors of Polanski and Romero.

Again given carte blanche, this time by producer Alfredo Leone after the success of *Baron Blood* (*Gli orrori del castello di Norimberga*, 1972), with *Lisa and the Devil* Bava essayed

A supremely visual experience... This is cinema at its most grandiose and rich, brimful of high-flown imagery



Asa, back from the dead and bent on revenge

his most personal film, realising a long-held ambition to marry the themes of his favourite author H.P. Lovecraft with the perversity explored in Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis*. A surprisingly experimental, dreamlike deconstruction of the tropes he had perfected in his earlier films, *Lisa* is a requiem for the passing of the Italian gothic cinema that he'd pioneered and perfected.

Lisa stars Elke Sommer as a tourist travelling through Toledo in Spain; transfixed by a fresco depicting the devil carrying the dead to hell, she leaves her troupe and loses herself among the town's labyrinthine backstreets. As night descends, Lisa takes a lift with an aristocratic couple, Francis Lehar (Eduardo Fajardo) and his wife Sophia (Sylva Koscina). When their car (an old Packard) breaks down, the trio seek refuge in a mansion owned by a blind countess (Alida Valli) and her son Maximilian (Alessio Orano). In this strange, disorienting place, Lisa stumbles into a confounding nightmare of perversion, murder and lost identity, all presided over by the countess's butler Leandro (fiendishly played by Telly Savalas), who bears an uncanny resemblance to the Devil depicted in the fresco seen at the start of the film.

Lisa and the Devil sees Bava eschew the orthodox narrative continuity of conventional genre cinema in favour of a dreamlike, non-linear mode of film narration. The decaying mansion in which Lisa finds herself becomes an irrational nightmare realm where time is in stasis (signified by handless clocks), characters appear and disappear, and reality gives way to illusion. As Lisa wanders further down the rabbit hole, Bava draws on his beloved lexicon of gothic tropes: decaying statues, shrubbery cloaked in mist, lavish period furnishings and funeral paraphernalia. But in this more experimental film, rather than expressing the traditional gothic supernatural concerns, the imagery is repurposed as the language of surrealism, of Lisa's subconscious. *Lisa and the Devil* is a gothic film, but a modernist one, which deconstructs and rebuilds the gothic as a means to poetically explore modern horror's more Freudian, anti-rational concerns.

Both *Lisa and the Devil* and *Black Sunday* were originally released in compromised versions around the world. *Black Sunday* is actually the original theatrical title of the adapted American version of *La maschera del demonio* which introduced new titles, cuts to violent scenes and a new score by Les Baxter. Despite packed screenings at Cannes in 1973, *Lisa and the Devil* failed to find theatrical distribution anywhere outside Spain. Desperate to recoup his investment, producer Leone shot new footage, adding scenes in the vein of *The Exorcist*'s more shocking moments. The resulting film, a travesty of Bava's original vision, was released to US audiences in 1975 as *The House of Exorcism*. The new Blu-ray editions from Arrow present both films in their original and bastardised forms. Extras include informative audio commentaries from Tim Lucas, author *All the Colors of the Dark*, the definitive Bava study. 📀

New releases

THE AMAZING MR BLUNDEN

Lionel Jeffries; UK 1972; Second Sight/Region 2 DVD; Certificate U; 99 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.78:1

Reviewed by Kate Stables

Less well known and less well loved than its predecessor *The Railway Children* (1970), Lionel Jeffries's enjoyably theatrical junior chiller about time-travelling ghosts is the superior of the two pieces – just as sentimental but darker and rather more robust. Produced during the heyday of British horror moviemaking and stuffed with Hammer Horror alumni (Madeline Smith and James Villiers preen hilariously if hammily as dissolute newlyweds), it weaves together elements of mystery, horror and comedy untidily but with élan. Jeffries, who doesn't dilute the spine-chilling narrative of Antonia Barber's source novel *The Ghosts*, isn't afraid of the morbid (a tinkling street song assures us that "all the little children, they are born to die"). But he leavens the supernatural with an engaging pantomime streak, expressed in a high-spirited central flashback to Regency low-life and outbreaks of slapstick humour as the child 'ghosts' wreak revenge on their friends' adult tormentors. Diana Dors, emanating gamey, gin-soaked menace as the murderous Mrs Wickens, has the vitality of a Dickens or a Disney villain, but only Laurence Naismith's troubled benefactor Mr Blunden matches her in intensity. The child actors can chiefly muster a pleasing naturalism between them, but they still wring commendable tension from the atmospheric, fire-strewn finale.

Disc: A pleasing transfer, which retains Gerry Fisher's gaudy 70s palette and does justice to Elmer Bernstein's lightly creepy score. A spot of luggage, like the vintage Lionel Jeffries interview on the Anchor Bay release, wouldn't have gone amiss.

BABETTE'S FEAST

Gabriel Axel; Denmark 1987; Artificial Eye/Region 2 DVD; Certificate U; 99 minutes; Aspect Ratio 16:9; Features: interview with Stéphane Audran, theatrical trailer

Reviewed by Kate Stables

First among 'foodie films' for its sensuous banquet finale (there's even a homage to it in Lasse Hallström's *Chocolat*), Gabriel Axel's careful, handsome and goodhearted adaptation of Karen Blixen's tale also kickstarted the Scandinavian heritage-film trend, alongside Bille August's *Pelle the Conqueror*. With its austere palette, dour landscapes and doggedly religious themes, it's the polar opposite of the 'cultural tourism' of Merchant Ivory et al, yet it's filled with yearning for the simpler values (not to mention the elaborate cuisine) of past times. Ponderous if painstaking in its recreation of the lost youthful opportunities of Danish spinster-sisters Philippa and Martine, the narrative springs to life when Stéphane Audran's fugitive Babette arrives at their door and adds some flair to the fare and the film. Hers is an enigmatic and intriguing performance, nicely contrasted with the open-faced playing of Dreyer veteran Birgitte Federspiel, whose Martine is an exemplar of Lutheran charity and conscience-searching (her nightmare about the sinful Catholic gluttony

of Babette's meal as a "witches' Sabbath" is particularly delicious). Despite a middlebrow caution that assiduously keeps the characters sympathetic and the interiors period-pretty, Babette's Eucharistic final feast – "a meal that is a love affair with no difference between bodily and spiritual appetite" – provides surprisingly chewy food for thought.

Disc: A pretty, pellucid transfer. Audran reveals in the minimal extras that the unexpected chic of her modest servant's garb was the work of Karl Lagerfeld.

CAIRO

W.S. Van Dyke; USA 1942; Warner Archives/Region 1 NTSC DVD; 101 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.37:1

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

Back in the Hollywood heyday when you didn't go to a movie but to The Movies, you often received, like a pie in the face, skylarking and utterly bewitching trifles like this wartime farce, a studio product which takes its narrative mandate so lightly that you come away with a clearer sense of how much fun it was to make than of the film's ostensible story. Written by nobody John McClain (but hatched by playwright Ladislav Fodor, whose rambling, globe-hopping career in movies included five *Mabuse* sequels), this unpretentious goof begins in a movie theatre showing a Jeanette MacDonald feature – where a grumpy patron asks a lady to put her obstructive hat back on rather than have his nap disturbed by the film. Soon we're introduced to Robert Young's eager journalist (his tabloid wins the coveted 'America's Most Difficult Small-Town Newspaper' award) who is sent on an international mission, gets lost at sea and lands in North Africa with drippingly urbane spy Reginald Owen. (A stray gunshot summons a horde of eager-to-surrender Italians over a dune.) In *Cairo* and now involved in wartime espionage, Young's rube runs across MacDonald's movie-star-in-hiding (who's also a spy, performing in Egyptian nightclubs and singing in Morse code), and she hires him as her butler.

Certainly one of the first, if not the first, flat-out spy spoof (the introductory card "irreverently dedicates" the film to spy authors in general), *Cairo* has a distinctive Preston Sturges flavour, only milder and sloppier,



Blithe spirits: 'The Amazing Mr Blunden'

always finding time for shtick and irrelevant song numbers, usually featuring Ethel Waters as MacDonald's savvy maid. ("You can tell he don't know nothing about the movies," she cracks, after Young's dinner-serving pratfall, "or he'd've landed smack in the mashed potatoes.") Full of digs at Hollywood, sly winks and broad character bits, the film comes close to manifesting, in its own way, the Godard/Tarantino idea of movies as a living, spontaneous, self-referential flow. There's a generalised sense of esprit here, and it's more than refreshing to see MacDonald, after years of pious duets with Nelson Eddy, return to the shiny-lidded, sexy-smile self that fairly bursts out of the Lubitsch musical comedies she made in the early 30s. *Cairo* is also director 'One-Take' Van Dyke's second-to-last film, made after he'd set up a wartime recruiting office at MGM and before he committed suicide in 1943, refusing treatment for cancer due to his devotion to Christian Science.

Disc: Fine transfer of an archive print.

THE DAWN PATROL

Howard Hawks; USA 1930; Warner Archives/Region 1 NTSC DVD; 108 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.37:1

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

The first version of John Monk Saunders's pervasively Howard Hawksian story (to be remade eight years later with Errol Flynn), this lovely, preachy, creaky early talkie is one of the seminal entries into the aviation-drama cycle of the day, complete with dogfights comprised equally of back-projection close-ups and real stunt-flying, a bucked-up sense of brotherhood and grief on the ground, and the narrative stress of the officers (here, a fuming Neil Hamilton) nearing complete emotional collapse after having to send brave young men to their deaths every day. In WWI France, Richard Barthelmess is the head ace everyone depends on to be strong, Douglas Fairbanks Jr is his party-hearty best friend, and a plethora of weary vets and fresh-faced rookies surround them, drinking and jumping into planes and battle trauma with taciturnity and bitter humour.

The narrative and moral DNA laid down here, born in the fields of Europe in the Great War, subsequently found its way into untold American and British war films (Saunders won an early Oscar). But in *Dawn Patrol* it is in nearly aboriginal form, carried by early talkies' still-unheralded allure, creaky innocence, sense of uncertain melodrama, a theatricality that seems closer to a madman's tiny cell than to an actual theatre stage, a threatening degree of archival decay, a self-conscious acting style that can border on the deranged, and an aural current marked by fizzles, audible sutures, unearthly pauses and a disconcerting silence devoid of ambient noises. It's time we appreciated this matrix of textures not merely as a transitional phase in the medium's technology, but as a distinct and beautiful syntax, a historical moment with its own antique lustre.

There's also the film's part in the long-neglected cultural struggle to assimilate and fathom the scars of WWI – the first bedevilling global horror to which



IN FROM THE COLD

Altman's career is usually thought to have started with *MASH* – but an earlier movie displays the first real signs of his mature style

THAT COLD DAY IN THE PARK

Robert Altman; USA 1969; Olive Films/Region A
Blu-ray/Region 1 DVD; 107 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.78:1

Reviewed by Dan Callahan

Robert Altman had been working as a director for close to 20 years before he had a big hit with *MASH* (1970), and he followed that commercial success with some of the finest and most unpredictable American films of the 1970s. Serious coverage of Altman's work usually begins with *MASH*, but he had made an intriguing movie the year before, *That Cold Day in the Park* (1969), which in some ways feels like the first real Altman feature: tough, exploratory, slightly mean-minded but also surprisingly empathetic. It's a little like Hemingway's wholly unexpected early short story 'Up in Michigan', which depicts the sexual awakening and pain of a lonely girl.

Altman had first offered the lead role of Frances Austen to Ingrid Bergman, who was somewhat insulted to have been asked to play such a repressed and disturbed character. Altman next sent the script to Vanessa Redgrave, who also turned it down but suggested that Sandy Dennis would be the ideal actress for this very difficult part. Dennis accepted the challenge, and Altman gives her full control here many times, especially in an extraordinarily intense and sustained four-and-a-half-minute monologue midway through the film.

In the first scenes, when Frances absentmindedly hosts some of her much older friends in her gloomy home, Altman layers his soundtrack with chatter so that we can barely make out what her friends are saying, and this puts us right in Frances's head – she can't be bothered to hear them either. Frances speaks in Dennis's distinctively anxious Julie Harris-on-downers diction, as if she's constantly afraid of some sudden attack, and her face looks both girlish and ancient, like a schoolgirl decaying into an elderly lady before our eyes (Dennis was just 32 when this was shot).

Frances sees a boy (Michael Burns) sitting outside on a park bench, and she keeps returning to her window to look at him. When it starts to rain and she expresses concern for the boy, her friends discourage her interest in his welfare. Frances reacts to their callousness with an understanding little smile, one of many piercing details that illuminate Dennis's patient performance, which never spells anything out for us but always holds to a discernible through-line of emotionally grounded, cautious behaviour. She shapes her work here



Home alone: Sandy Dennis as Frances Austen in 'That Cold Day in the Park'

Ingrid Bergman was somewhat insulted to have been asked to play such a repressed and disturbed character

with consummate skill, never yielding to the more outré and notorious physical and vocal mannerisms of some of her lesser work.

Frances brings the boy in out of the rain and lets him sleep in the spare room of her neglected house. He's a nondescript blond, and

he says nothing at all as she quietly chatters away, telling him how she nursed her senile mother until the old woman died. Altman discreetly posits this silent boy as a sex object for Frances, cutting to shots of his legs as she guiltily stares at him. Sex is something that Frances wants but is fearful of, and it's clear in the last third of the film that this conflict cannot end well either for her or her love object.

As a script, *That Cold Day* is in line with small-scaled women's pictures of this period such as *Rachel, Rachel* (1968) or *The Rain People* (1969), but it is transformed into something larger by Altman's wary curiosity and Dennis's shy, rich creativity. The basic situation between Frances and the boy is highly redolent of an older gay male taking in a younger straight male, a feeling only underlined when Frances goes out to get the boy a female prostitute to service him (Bruce LaBruce's 1993 film *No Skin off My Ass* is an outright gay homage to this obscure Altman movie).

This is a movie that isn't at all concerned with holding our attention. There's something insolent about its opaque privacy, and this insolence might be seen as either enthralling or alienating, but *That Cold Day* deserves more serious attention, both as a tentative beginning for Altman's mature style and a bookend for his glorification of Dennis in his mid-period *Come Back to the Five and Dime*, *Jimmy Dean*, *Jimmy Dean* (1982), where she gives one of the all-time great film performances.

The film's dark imagery looks quite handsome on Olive Films' new release, and the deliberately fuzzy sound is most likely what it should be. This is another essential title from Olive, a company that has an uncanny knack for picking exactly the right must-have orphan films for its DVD label.



New releases

→ movies responded, and seen this way the grim visages and pointless cycles of terminal flights are especially haunting. The underwhelming Barthelmess himself might be the film's largest hurdle, but in counterpoint you've got the unlikely spectacle, in footage reused for the Flynn remake, of crisscrossing biplanes (suggesting steampunk robot-dragonflies we'd forgotten once existed), the exquisite round-the-room chorus of Bartholomew Dowling's 'Stand by Your Glasses Steady' ('Hurrah for the next man to die') and the rapturous shots of planes leaving the ground crew standing in the dawn mist, like the fishermen's wives in *La terra trema* (1948). The film's teary, flag-waving patriotism, sublimated as it is by the bonds of feverish bromance, is finally as adorable as seven-year-olds playing soldier.

Disc: Another silvery archival print, sadly without extras.

DEATHTRAP

Sidney Lumet; USA 1982; Warner Archive
Blu-ray; 116 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1

Reviewed by Peter Tonguette

"Dialogue," Sidney Lumet once wrote, "is not uncinematic" – and he proved it with his superlative *Deathtrap*, based on Ira Levin's play about murder among rival Broadway dramatists. With a cast that chatters on breathlessly, most of the time on one main set, the project nonetheless gave Lumet a chance to demonstrate his directorial dexterity. "For me, these films... are like the parallel bars in gymnastics," he told an interviewer (also referring to his earlier *Murder on the Orient Express*). "They are for practising and maintaining your technique."

So, like the trouper he was, Lumet recreated the play's big moments cinematically. Particularly elegant is the way the presence of elder-statesman playwright Sidney Bruhl (Michael Caine) is revealed in the background of a low-angle shot after we have thought him mortally injured – an 'entrance' that could never be reproduced on stage – or the way Andrzej Bartkowiak's camera emphasises the vim and vigour of Bruhl's protégé Clifford Anderson (Christopher Reeve) by staying close on him as he circles Bruhl threateningly.

Lumet also brings out a hushed intensity in Caine when, fresh off a flop, Bruhl seems to serenely arrive at the idea to kill Anderson and rip off his auspicious debut play. Even better is Dyan Cannon as Bruhl's wife Myra. After she discovers his intentions, her astonished reaction is captured in touching close-ups that reveal her lined face and disbelieving, wishing-it-wasn't-so demeanour. Bruhl turns out to be more devious than she could ever imagine, though no worse than the rest of the cast, all of whom apparently – including a kindly old psychic (Irene Worth) – will surrender their morals for the chance to drink champagne on a Broadway opening night. Through it all, Myra remains the story's only guiltless character, and long after the film is over we remember Cannon's darting eyes and uncomfortable laughter as she hopes – prays,

really – that her husband is merely kidding.

Disc: There are no special features, but the transfer is quite handsome.

DRACULA

Terence Fisher; UK 1958; Lionsgate/Icon/Hammer/
Region B Blu-ray and Region 2 DVD Dual Format; 82 minutes;
Aspect Ratio 1.66:1; Features: four featurettes, unrestored
Japanese reels, commentary by Marcus Hearn and Jonathan
Rigby, 'TV World of Hammer' episode, reading from original
novel, stills gallery, booklet (PDF), shooting script (PDF)

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

Having scored at the box office with *The Curse of Frankenstein* (1957) and reaped some gratifyingly outraged press comments ("Among the half-dozen most repulsive films I have encountered," spat C.A. Lejeune in the *Observer*), Hammer lost no time in exploiting the other great British horror myth. *Frankenstein* had hit problems with Universal, who refused the use of Jack Pierce's iconic flat-top look for the Monster; for *Dracula* Hammer made no such mistake, and did a deal with the Hollywood studio which included assigning overseas distribution rights. It paid off handsomely for both parties: *Dracula* took even more money than its predecessor, and Universal assigned to Hammer the remake rights for their entire horror library.

Previous screen Draculas had been chilling (Max Schreck's Nosferatu) or hammy (Bela Lugosi) but never sexy. Hammer's version captures all the lethal erotic allure of the original. Christopher Lee embodies Bram Stoker's suave, decadent aristocrat to the life (or undeath), tall and effortlessly dominating, infecting virtuous Victorian maidens and wives with his lecherous bloodlust. (Although, probably for reasons of budget, the very English Holmwood household is bizarrely

relocated to somewhere in Austria-Hungary, a mere night's ride from Castle Dracula.) Nor had the story ever enjoyed the benefits of full colour, and the flowing crimson alarmed the British censor no less than the critics.

The blood, and Dracula's final bodily dissolution, evidently exercised the BBFC more than the film's eroticism, and several cuts were demanded. It's this shortened version that's been released on VHS and DVD until now, with muddy colour and in the wrong ratio. But an uncut print was preserved in a Japanese archive. It was badly damaged in a fire, but the last four reels survived, rather battered. Thanks to valiant restoration work by the BFI, Molinare and Deluxe 142, excised scenes have been cleaned up and seamlessly reinserted, the colour regraded and the correct 1.66:1 ratio restored. This is as near intact a version of Hammer's *Dracula* as we're ever likely to see.

Lee, and Peter Cushing as his dispassionate nemesis Van Helsing, stand out among an otherwise makeweight cast, though Miles Malleon adds a jocular cameo as an undertaker. The once X-rated shocks, of course, have faded over the years, and this *Dracula* is hardly scary by today's standards. But as an influential period piece it holds its own.

Disc: A fine transfer. The rich, deep Victorian colours of DP Jack Asher's lensing and Bernard Robinson's resourceful set designs come up superbly, especially on Blu-ray, and the soundtrack lends clarity to James Bernard's distinctive orchestration. Among the lavish extras on the three-disc set, pride of place goes to the 30-minute 'Dracula Reborn', with screenwriter Jimmy Sangster recalling Hammer's frugal budgetary limitations: bats, rats and wolves, it seems, were strictly out.



Onibaba Its undimmed potency lies in the fact that it works as an unnervingly blunt horror film (and how!) and as a far more nuanced social critique

THE MONSTER SQUAD

Fred Dekker; USA 1987; Olive Films/Region 1 DVD and Region A Blu-ray; 82 minutes; Aspect Ratio 2.35:1

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

The last time I saw *The Monster Squad*, which was probably the 20th time I'd seen it, I was pretty thoroughly convinced that it was the single greatest movie ever made. Granted, I was around nine.

Having been writing about movies today longer than I'd been alive then, I discovered much pleasure not purely grounded in nostalgia when re-viewing *The Monster Squad* on Olive Films' Blu-ray. It concerns a group of pre-adolescent boys, members of a clubhouse gang devoted to monster movies, who, thanks to their knowledge of Fangoria esoterica, become the last line of defence when their town is invaded by a Universal Monsters supergroup of Dracula, Frankenstein's monster, the Wolf Man, the Mummy and *The Creature from the Black Lagoon's* Gill-man.

The Monster Squad is shot with some flair by *Night of the Creeps* director Fred Dekker; Dekker co-wrote the script with friend Shane Black, who was fresh out of UCLA and had just made a bundle off the *Lethal Weapon* script. Their genre pastiche aspired to piggyback on the success of 1985's *The Goonies*, with Tom Noonan memorable as a kid-friendly Frankenstein's monster who doesn't kill the little girl he meets by the lake, inspired by the earlier film's gentle giant Sloth. The real star turns, however, are the golden-age analogue makeup FX, each monster having been redesigned by the artisans at Stan Winston Studio, with Gill-man in particular a prize piece of work.

There's also a surprising amount of splatter for a kids' movie, while Dekker and Black's world of preteen bullying cruelty and icky horniness does anything but idealise suburban boyhood, even to the point of overstepping its boundaries. Leonardo Cimino plays neighbourhood bogeyman Scary German Guy, discreetly revealed as a Holocaust survivor in an aside so inappropriately sombre ("You sure know a lot about monsters!" "Now that you mention it, I suppose I do...") that it is almost awe-striking. *The Monster Squad* tanked at the box office but found a second life on VHS, for every one of my American generational coevals can identify the famous one-liner "Wolf Man's got nards!", preserved anew for future generations, and all mankind.

Disc: Olive's Blu-ray follows Lionsgate's two-disc '20th Anniversary Edition' of 2007, vastly improving image while including approximately no extras.

ON APPROVAL

Clive Brook; UK 1944; Inception Media Group/Region A Blu-ray; 80 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.37:1; Features: commentary by Jeffrey Vance, interview with Google Withers, stills gallery.

Reviewed by Peter Tonguette

Frederick Lonsdale's play has an irresistible set-up: in the 1890s, a couple ensconce themselves on a Scottish isle to determine whether they are marriage material or not. Of course, in Clive Brook's masterful film adaptation, it's instantly obvious that meek,



Sexy beast: 'Dracula'

biddable Richard (Roland Culver) is no match for the high-handed, short-tempered Maria (Beatrice Lillie). Richard is outraged when his friend George (Brook) goads the seemingly unprepossessing Maria about being in her forties, but his threats lack credibility: Richard defending Maria is like David defending Goliath. He is so easily manipulated by her that he goes along with her decree that, during their time together, he will spend nights alone at an inn on the mainland, accessible by rowboat, and that he should bring a slicker in case the forecast calls for rain.

By contrast, George – the bankrupt tenth duke of Bristol, who has connived his way into joining Richard and Maria on their trip – is a breath of fresh air in his asstringency. He's so egocentric that he doesn't blanch when, having sat down for a late lunch on the patio, he sends Helen (a sweet-faced American accompanying him, played by Google Withers) inside not once but three times to deliver him his meal, and then his bread and butter. He even has the temerity to critique her rice pudding. "What it lacks in milk," he deadpans, "it makes up for in rice."

While George is no less insulting to Maria, on screen Brook has a kingly air that perfectly complements Lillie's condescending self-importance. In fact, the film answers the question posed by the plot – how much should one know about a future husband or wife? – by suggesting that George and Maria's shared surliness is more than enough to unite them: no time spent 'on approval' is required. The sentiment evoked by this unlikely pairing is real. When Lillie and Brook touchingly warble those immortal words by Ben Jonson ("Drink to me only with thine eyes, And I will pledge with mine"), we must conclude that, yes, even two old cusses should have a chance at happiness.

Disc: The transfer is luminous, and the high point of the special features is a delightful interview with Withers, who recounts the film's troubled production with affection.

ONIBABA

Shindô Kaneto; Japan 1964; Eureka/Masters of Cinema/Region B Blu-ray and Region 2 DVD Dual Format; Certificate 15; 103 minutes; Aspect Ratio 2.35:1 (DVD anamorphic); Features: introduction by Alex Cox, commentary by Shindô Kaneto, Satô Kei and Yoshimura Jitsuko, 8mm location footage, trailer, booklet

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

Approaching next year's half-century in splendid shape, Shindô Kaneto's best-known feature still packs a genuine wallop for its violence, its startlingly explicit sexuality (it's not remotely surprising that the BBFC rejected it outright on first submission and scissored it second time round) and its almost Beckettian view of a conflict-ridden world reduced to a gigantic field of untamed susuki grass, in which people scrape a barely subsistence-level living by preying on others who are either permanently or temporarily weaker than themselves.

The two women at its heart are never named, but we can tell everything about them from the way they behave when they ruthlessly spear two samurai to death, dump the bodies in what appears to be an unfathomably deep hole and swap the men's possessions for a meagre bag of millet. Like animal scavengers, their actions are dispassionately practical, their amorality driven by the need to survive without their presumed-dead menfolk. But when the soldier Hachi arrives to pass on news of the younger woman's husband, they experience a different kind of hunger, and the resulting urges underpinning almost everything thereafter give the film's overtly demonic final act a much more potent psychological charge than it had in the Buddhist fable that inspired Shindô (reproduced in the booklet). In the original, the younger woman provoked the older woman's jealousy purely through her religious self-betterment, whereas here both women's impulses are all too primal.

But *Onibaba's* lasting greatness and undimmed potency lie in the fact that it works both as an unneringly blunt horror film (and how!) and as a far more nuanced but nonetheless universal social critique that can easily be applied to any parallel situation – even, as Doug Cummings points out in his booklet essay, a futuristic post-apocalyptic one. Although the title literally translates as 'The Demoness', Shindô makes it clear that the women are as much victims of their lowly status and unfortunate circumstances as they are agents of their own destruction.

Discs: Boasting a near-pristine image, *Onibaba* looks marvellous in high definition. The extras, including a chatty commentary from Shindô and two actors, have been ported over from the previous DVD release.

THE OUTSIDE MAN

Jacques Deray; France/Italy/USA 1972; MGM Limited Edition/Region-free DVD; 105 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1

Reviewed by David Thompson

Right at the start of this film a caption reads "Los Angeles", and indeed that might also be the alternative title of this French love letter to the sprawling Californian metropolis. A smooth, dark-suited Frenchman –



Rediscovery

PARIS, CITY OF LIGHT

Friend to Renoir and Reiniger, André Sauvage was one of the 20th century's great ciné-poets, as a lavish new restoration reveals

ETUDES SUR PARIS

André Sauvage, France, 1928; Carlotta Films/Region 2 DVD; 80 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1; Features: alternate scores, six short films by Sauvage, 48-page illustrated booklet (in French)

Reviewed by Chris Darke

If there was ever a filmmaker for whom the term *maudit* might have been invented, it was André Sauvage, cursed by bad luck, technical misfortunes and uncomprehending financiers – only one of the eight films he made in his relatively short career between 1923 and 1933 has survived fully intact. But he was also blessed in having a particularly tenacious daughter, Agnès, who began the long battle to rehabilitate her father's work after his death in 1975. Carlotta Films' lavish restoration package marks the culmination of her labours, and its centrepiece, the 1928 film-poem *Etudes sur Paris*, is a revelation.

Born in 1891 to a middle-class Bordeaux family, Sauvage moved to Paris in his twenties, working there as a banker to support his artistic activities. A novelist, painter and photographer as well as a filmmaker, he moved in the cultural circles of the time, counting among his friends Jean Renoir, Lotte Reiniger and surrealist poets Max Jacob and Robert Desnos. Establishing his own production company, Sauvage initially distinguished himself as a maker of adventurous documentary travelogues, including an Alpine mountaineering film *La traversée du Grépon* (1923) and the Mediterranean-themed *Portrait de la Grèce* (1927). Unusually for the period, both were feature-length films and are now lost; the remaining outtakes and rushes are included on the disc. The 30-minute assembly of footage from Sauvage's portrait of Greece is particularly illuminating: the supple mobility of his camera style is already evident as is his fondness for cross-fades, both of which would be put to supremely poetic use in his next film, *Etudes sur Paris*.

Sauvage described Paris as a city that "for mystery and unexpectedness, humanity and beauty, is equal to the North Pole and the Sahara", and he explores these qualities in five 'études', or 'studies'. Iconic Parisian landmarks such as the Eiffel Tower and Notre-Dame are portrayed alongside far less well-known sights. A remarkable sequence in the opening 'étude', entitled *Paris-Port*, voyages through an underground stretch of the Paris canal system, the subterranean darkness punctuated by brilliant columns of light falling from overhead shafts. It's a telling moment for the way Sauvage manages to combine the dynamic visual effect of light with a study

of working life on the canals. So 'étude' here has a double meaning. On one hand, the film is indeed a study of the people and places of Paris. On the other, it also studies the possible cinematic treatment of one of film's intrinsic elements, light. The term 'Etude' was thus used to designate the abstract experiments undertaken by the European avant garde of the time, such as in Hans Richter's *Filmstudie* (*Etude cinématographique*) (1926). Richter must have spotted a kindred experimenter in Sauvage because he selected *Paris-Port* for the film programme of the epochal 'Film und Foto' exhibition mounted in Stuttgart in 1929.

One of the most enchanting qualities of *Etudes sur Paris* is how unobtrusively it wears its avant gardism. Touches of rhetorical editing gesture towards the montage experiments of the period: short time-lapse sequences or superimpositions, which suddenly populate a deserted space with Sunday strollers. There's also a surrealist fascination with shop-window mannequins and fairground automata, and fun is had with juxtaposing advertising hoardings with the details and activities of street life. As an example of the 1920s genre of avant-garde documentary known as the 'city symphony', *Etudes sur Paris* sits somewhere between the hyperventilating formalism of Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929) and the

Sauvage described Paris as a city that "for mystery and unexpectedness... is equal to the North Pole or the Sahara"

canted camera angles of Walter Ruttmann's *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (1927).


While the outtakes and rushes included as extras on the Carlotta release haven't been restored, they are fascinating in themselves and of good enough quality visually to merit inclusion, as well as to make one regret the loss of their original films. But *Etudes* itself is a breathtaking piece of restoration work. The film was first photochemically restored in 1991 by the Centre National de la Cinématographie and then digitally at the Cineteca di Bologna (the institution behind the increasingly indispensable Il Cinema Ritrovato festival). The milky-silver tones of the monochrome footage breathe 'modernity' and 'realism' simultaneously. The two alternate scores work equally well: the Prima Vista String Quartet supplying equal measures of jaunty and elegiac notes, while electronic music pioneer Jeff Mills lays down a well-judged, lightly bubbling techno-patina that brings out the still-resonant modernity of the images.

The package is also a historical eye-opener, establishing Sauvage as the missing link between the 1920s documentary avant garde and the effortless naturalism of Vigo and Renoir. It's impossible to watch the canal sequences in *Etudes* without thinking of *L'Atalante*, made six years later. And among the extras is *Pivoine Déménage* (1929), a 17-minute comedy in which Michel Simon plays a Parisian tramp three years before Renoir would immortalise him in *Boudu sauvé des eaux* (1932). Sauvage can now take his rightful place alongside Vertov and Ruttmann as one of the great metropolitan ciné-poets of the early 20th century. 📽️



Hidden city: André Sauvage's 'Etudes sur Paris'

New releases

 Jean-Louis Trintignant at his most weaselly and inscrutable – flies in to carry out a hit on a corrupt businessman. The job done, he plans to leave for home but finds that he is himself the target of another hired assassin (Roy Scheider). What follows is a fairly labyrinthine plot in which Trintignant strives to avoid being shot and to sort out what is happening, all of which provides an excuse for the filmmakers to explore the more bizarre and fascinating aspects of the city – the hippies, the prostitutes, the topless bars, the roller derby, the ruins of an old pier by the beach, the crummy motels, and so on. Director Jacques Deray has a marvellous cast to play with, including Ann-Margret as a seen-it-all club owner, Angie Dickinson as a cool and fickle widow, and Georgia Engel (brilliant in *Taking Off*) as a ditsy woman briefly taken hostage and given her moment of media fame. In addition to his fascinating deployment of Americana, Deray (famous for *La Piscine* and *Borsalino* but not a lot else) also manages to stage some convincing car chases and bring a splendid dark humour to the intrigue.

A clue to the film's unexpected twists on a not-unfamiliar genre dilemma perhaps lies in the author of the story and screenplay – Jean-Claude Carrière. There is unquestionably a surrealist's delight in such moments as the Jesus freak who dies just as he proclaims his personal salvation, or the bizarre concluding funeral of the assassin's target, who is discovered not lying in a coffin but sat like a menacing waxwork on a throne, proudly flourishing a cigar. Added pleasure comes from two of the cast of *The Godfather* popping up in this final scene, namely Talia Shire and Alex Rocco. All in all, the film has the hallmarks of a cult discovery, yet has remained largely uncherished for years. A candidate for a remake by Quentin Tarantino, perhaps?

Disc: A good transfer. The very brief sections of French dialogue do not appear with subtitles, which (I believe) they once did. The sleeve note manages in one sentence to misrepresent the plot. No extras.

LA POISON

Sacha Guitry; France 1951; Eureka/Masters of Cinema/Region B Blu-ray and Region 2 DVD Dual Format; Certificate PG; 85 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1; Features: documentary ('On Life On-Screen: Miseries and Splendour of a Monarch'), booklet

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

Befitting its no-nonsense title, Sacha Guitry's film serves up black comedy at its most gleefully cynical, in which murder is philosophically justified and the law is comprehensively revealed to be an absolute ass. The latter sentiment is especially heartfelt: at the start of the film, an on-camera Guitry introduces his cast and crew and expresses especial appreciation for the accuracy of the prison-cell set – a detail that no one familiar with his troubled mid-1940s history is likely to miss.

But despite this apparent score-settling and a seemingly penny-dreadful subject (a disaffected husband and wife harbour secret plans to kill each other), the film is somehow



Toxic avenger: 'La Poison'

as soufflé-light as Ealing's bookending *Kind Hearts and Coronets* and *The Ladykillers*, which gave serial murder and granny-bashing a similar air of disconcerting levity. It's easy to tell from a dialogue description of the protagonist Paul Braconnier as a man who "looks like a monster, but has a strange kind of charm – halfway between chimera and clown" that the part was written with the incomparable Michel Simon in mind, one of the few actors who could take an unambiguously murderous misogynist and turn him into some kind of tragic hero.

The large supporting cast is deftly sketched, including Germaine Reuver's monstrous shrew of a wife (the Braconniers' mealtimes are sullen, surly affairs, mockingly underscored by airy radio *chansons*), Jean Debucourt's blithely arrogant lawyer Aubanel (the mid-point scene in which he's given an official bollocking – "Jurisprudence is not theatre!" – being a particular highlight) and Jeanne Fusier-Gir's one-woman Greek chorus of a small-town florist, whose evident self-image as a latterday *tricoteuse* is reinforced by her French Revolutionary chalk-board calendar. Like all expert farceurs, Guitry plays it slowly at first, meticulously planting little comedic bombles that are primed to explode when the action starts revving up.

Disc: The Gaumont-sourced Blu-ray transfer is very good by normal standards, and the restored source print is impeccably clean, but the image isn't as pin-sharp as the best efforts from this pedigree label. But everything else matches or exceeds expectations, including conscientious subtitles and an hour-long documentary that uses the film as a jumping-off point for a more generalised discussion of Simon and Guitry's highly distinctive personalities (the latter's misogyny isn't soft-pedalled).

THE QATSI TRILOGY

KOYAANISQATSI/POWAQQATSI/NAQOYQATSI

Godfrey Reggio; USA 1983/1988/2002; Criterion/Region A Blu-ray/Region 1 NTSC DVD; 86/99/89 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1/1.85:1/1.78:1 (DVDs anamorphic); Features: short film ('Anima Mundi'), documentaries ('Essence of Life', 'Impact of Progress', 'The Making of Naqoyqatsi'), interviews with Godfrey Reggio, Ron Fricke, Philip Glass, Yo-Yo Ma, rough cuts, panel discussion, trailers, booklet

Reviewed by Michael Brooke

The four collaborations between monk-turned-filmmaker Godfrey Reggio and composer Philip Glass (including 1992's wildlife eco-

paeon *Anima Mundi*), almost entirely wordless *cris de coeur*, comprise one of American cinema's most singular creative achievements. While individual sequences suggest naively utopian polemics emerging from heads as stuffed with rapidly scudding clouds as any of *Koyaanisqatsi*'s much sampled time-lapse images, Reggio's consistent philosophical purpose is clearer when his work is viewed *in toto*, and has gained increasing relevance in a world where 'globalisation' and 'man-made climate change' are part of our daily vocabulary.

Koyaanisqatsi offers a caustic comparison of the beauties of natural landscapes and the scarring encroachment of modern so-called 'civilisation'. Although it's since become a whopping visual cliché, the image of the city as a cross between an electrical circuit board and a living organism complete with glowing circulatory system remains as intoxicating as anything seen since Kubrick took us through the stargate in 2001: *A Space Odyssey*.

Filmed below the equator, *Powaqqatsi* thinks globally: the slow, contemplative first half examines the grinding rhythms of human activity (mainly labour-related) in what initially appear to be pre-industrial societies – before the ravishing cinematography gives way to something faster and uglier as it becomes clear that these people are not just working for us but following in our footsteps. The fact that it could have been made last week speaks volumes in itself.

Sadly, *Naqoyqatsi* offers diminishing returns. A thrilling first third (in which Pieter Bruegel the Elder's painting of the Tower of Babel becomes a visual metaphor for the way the world has become increasingly digitised and information-led) gives way to overly familiar antimilitarism polemics (whose subtlety can be gauged by a sequence intercutting videogames with actual riot footage), presented here in fussily overproduced layerings of stock footage and computer graphics. Glass's coruscating score is comfortably its strongest feature.

Disc: *Koyaanisqatsi* and especially *Powaqqatsi* look flatout stunning, though *Naqoyqatsi* is hampered by its greater reliance on video post-production. Still, Reggio's seal of approval confirms these high-definition transfers as definitive, and the thunderous soundtracks are truly spectacular. Several hours of extras cover every base, with *Koyaanisqatsi*'s lengthy stop-start development offering particularly rich pickings: would we ever have heard of it if it had been completed with the Allen Ginsberg recitation and accordion drone that accompanied one of its rough cuts?

RUN FOR COVER

Nicholas Ray; USA 1955; Olive Films/Region 1 NTSC DVD/Region A Blu-ray; 93 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.85:1

Reviewed by Michael Atkinson

The forgotten, thoughtful genre film Nicholas Ray made right between the sensational seizures of *Johnny Guitar* and *Rebel Without a Cause*, this New Mexico western may not be one of the director's eight or so canonical masterpieces but it's a necessary launch of Ravian unease all the same. Ray's

New releases

ultimate programme was the exploration of the instability inherent in America's ideas about itself, and this Winston Miller-penned frontier saga unsettles the genre's ethical formulas from the very first of several lynch-mob debacles. Wanderer James Cagney and local kid John Derek meet not-so-cute on the trail and almost immediately get mistaken for trainrobbers – the posse later apologise for shooting the pair right off their horses, but Derek ends up with a permanent limp that crushes his chances of making a living. Cagney practically adopts the kid, becomes the new sheriff, and installs himself in an unexceptional town whose inhabitants are as likely to hang a thief in the street as to attend church. (When bankrobber Ernest Borgnine is arrested, his primary concern is protection from the townies.) We follow Cagney's – and Hollywood tradition's – hopes that the gimpy Derek will overcome his humiliation and bitterness and finally man up, but Ray and Miller have other ideas, and entire tenets about masculinity, faith and morality are subtly turned on their heads.

However filthy the film is with mercenary outlaws and homicidal Comanches, its only real villain is the average person's maddening capacity for betrayal. Ray's use of the frame is eloquent and tasteful, especially with a climactic and ghostly use of real Aztec ruins, but it's twisting human drama – centred on Cagney's bullethead, as righteous and vulnerable as a scoutmaster surrounded by sociopathic children – that makes the movie live. Derek is his usual unconvincing self, but Cagney, weathered like a fence post, can hardly believe the human zoo in which he finds himself.

Disc: Standard archival print, decent widescreen transfer.

WE CAN'T GO HOME AGAIN

Nicholas Ray; USA 1973/2011; Oscilloscope/Region 0 Blu-ray and DVD; 95 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1; Features: 'Don't Expect Too Much' (2011), 'Camera Three: Profile of Nicholas Ray' (1977), rushes from 'Marco' (1977), 'The Janitor' (1974), interviews, booklet containing texts by Susan Ray, Serge Daney and Bill Krohn

Reviewed by Brad Stevens

Made nearly two decades after *Run for Cover* (see above), this experimental feature from Ray – a product of the years he spent teaching at Harpur College during the early 1970s – has long been one of cinema's legendary 'unfinished' works (though a version shown at Cannes in 1973 has played at various retrospectives). This 2011 restoration, supervised by Ray's widow Susan, is visually identical to that version, but adds a first-person voiceover recorded by Ray after the Cannes screening.

The narrative, such as it is, focuses on the director/teacher's interactions with his students, but Ray's primary concern is with the breaking down of barriers between fiction and documentary, using multiple images to portray a generation of rebels-with-a-cause who rejected the values their parents had accepted unquestioningly. As so often in Ray's work, the expression of energy is valued in its own right, with process far more important



They do voodoo: 'White Zombie'

than any conceivable result. *We Can't Go Home Again* could never have been anything other than a work in progress, and as such it provides an invaluable record of Ray's attempt to make "what in our minds is a *Guernica* out of such materials as a broken-down Bolex and a Mitchell that cost \$25 out of navy surplus".

Disc: The transfer's limitations are inherent in the way this version of the film was assembled in 1973, with multiple images projected on to a transparent screen and then recorded by a 35mm camera. The rather ramshackle quality of the result is actually highly appropriate, and the film certainly looks better than it ever has before. It's a shame that none of the scenes Ray shot after the Cannes screening are represented on this disc (one of them can be seen in Wim Wenders's *Lightning over Water*), and a commentary track would have been more than usually welcome. But otherwise this is an exemplary package, including a feature-length documentary by Susan Ray, a fascinating public television interview, and the rushes for Ray's unfinished short *Marco*. Perhaps best of all is *The Janitor* (1974), Ray's contribution to the portmanteau feature *Wet Dreams*, its final shots, in which Ray sets fire to a screen on which his own image is being projected, providing a resonant summing-up of *We Can't Go Home Again*'s concerns.

WHITE ZOMBIE

Victor Halperin; USA 1932; Kino Classics/Region A Blu-ray/Region 1 DVD; 67 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1; Features: digitally restored and unenhanced transfers, commentary by Frank Thompson, 1932 interview with Bela Lugosi, 1951 theatrical rerelease trailer

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

You find a great deal of business being conducted on uncharted isles in the movies of the pre-Code 1930s, from *King Kong*'s Skull Island to *The Most Dangerous Game* to *Let's Go Native* to 1932's *Island of Lost Souls*, whose mutant population was led by a manimal Bela Lugosi – also the star of the same year's *White Zombie*,

set on a nightmare version of the geographically verifiable island of Haiti.

For *White Zombie*, brothers Victor and Edward Halperin, an independent director-producer team, rented Universal Pictures' lots, atmospheric sets, and Lugosi, the contract creep-show star of the moment. Bela plays a white master of voodoo magic named Murder Legendre, who turns the half-dead into marionettes to do his bidding, a mind-control spell cast as Lugosi's eyes fill and dominate the screen in looming close-up while he gives himself a crushing, white-knuckle handshake. (You may recall Johnny Depp practising this manoeuvre in Tim Burton's *Ed Wood*.)

The Halperins' *White Zombie* is the first feature-length zombie film – and so, at an 80-year remove, distantly responsible for dreck like *Warm Bodies*. While the stars, including Madge Bellamy and John Harron as a menaced young couple, are of the island's white elite, black menials are everywhere about, and *White Zombie* makes explicit the connection between living-dead thrall and slavish drudgery – as Val Lewton's *I Walked with a Zombie* would 11 years later. *White Zombie*'s single most startling scene has Robert Frazer's aristocratic plantation head visiting Legendre at his sugar factory, which is staffed by an army of hypnotised drones who don't pause in their steady shuffle even when one of their number topples, without so much as a scream, into the blades of the hopper that's chopping up cane. With such effects, *White Zombie* is as mean and resourceful as the best of Poverty Row, wringing anxious poetry out of otherworldly glass-matte paintings, stuffed vultures, a decoupage of eerie library music and lugubrious, funereal images imbued with a solemn sense of ceremony.

Disc: Kino's knockout package includes two full versions of *White Zombie*, one digitally sanitised, the other 'raw', with pockmarks intact. (The latter is a more fitting way to experience the film.) Historian Frank Thompson provides an affectionately opinionated commentary, particularly hard on poor Madge Bellamy. **S**

THE WAY OF THE GUN

Ozu's early gangster films offer a fascinating glimpse of the young director experimenting with the potential of his medium

THE GANGSTER FILMS – THREE SILENT FILMS BY YASUJIRO OZU

A STRAIGHTFORWARD BOY (FRAGMENT)/WALK CHEERFULLY/ THAT NIGHT'S WIFE/DAGNET GIRL

Ozu Yasujiro; Japan 1929/30/30/33; BFI/Region 2 DVD; 13/92/63/96 minutes; Aspect Ratio 1.33:1; Feature: 'Ozu: Emotion and Poetry'; booklet

Reviewed by Philip Kemp

Having invaluable broadened our appreciation of Ozu with last year's release of a batch of his silent 'student comedies', the BFI continues the good work with three-and-a-bit of his gangster films. As before, it's fascinating to see how Ozu, at the outset of his career, was far from the austere, fixed-camera, long-unbroken-take director we're familiar with from his post-war output. In these films his camera tracks, pans and glides; cutting is often fast and rhythmic, with frequent use of shot/countershot; and angles stray far from the tatami-mat height beloved of the older director. *Dragnet Girl* opens on a vertiginous high angle of people on their way to an office job, and soon afterwards the camera tracks rapidly along a row of busily clacking typewriters. Later we get a scene framed in the wing-mirror of a speeding limousine. At this stage Ozu was clearly delighted with the Terpsichorean potential of his medium and saw little need to restrain himself.

Another feature in common with the student comedies (which, like the present releases, date from the late 20s and early 30s) is Ozu's evident fascination with all things Western. This "most Japanese of all" directors, as Donald Richie termed him, here openly parades his American influences: posters for recent Hollywood releases (*Our Dancing Daughters*, *Broadway Scandals*, *All Quiet on the Western Front*) adorn the walls of his sets, and his characters for the most part wear slick suits, snap-brim hats, flapper-style dresses and bobbed hair. There's even a touch of overseas product placement: in *Dragnet Girl* the HMV dog almost shows up often enough to become a member of the cast.

Even so, to call these movies 'gangster films' arouses slightly misleading expectations. There are none of the high-speed car chases, fast repartee or Tommy-gun shoot-outs of *Little Caesar*, *Public Enemy* or *Scarface*. Guns are brandished, but in all these films there are only two gunshots, each resulting in nothing more than a flesh wound. A few people are punched but no one is killed. Ozu certainly knew the contemporary Hollywood crime cycle, but his model here seems to be the slightly earlier films of Josef von Sternberg (*The Docks of New York*, *Underworld*) with



Scene of the crime: Ozu shows endless ingenuity in 1930's 'That Night's Wife'

There are none of the high-speed car chases, fast repartee or Tommy-gun shoot-outs of 'Public Enemy' or 'Scarface'

their moody, melancholy atmosphere.

The earliest specimen here, the 13-minute fragment of the four-reeler *A Straightforward Boy*, scarcely qualifies as gangster at all. Lifting its plot from O. Henry's short story 'The Ransom of Red Chief', it has two inept would-be kidnappers easily outsmarted by their intended victim, a brattish small boy who gleefully peels off their false moustaches and shoots rubber-suction arrows at their heads. The light-hearted mood carries over into *Walk Cheerfully*, with a dapper smalltime gang boss whose henchmen break into a synchronised jazz-baby dance routine every time he shows up. He's induced to give up his criminal ways for the love of a nice girl, and finds a steady job as a window cleaner. (Hard to imagine Cagney or Eddie Robinson doing likewise.) The film dwells on odd details, such as an obsession with hats – thrown, dropped, retrieved – that seems to anticipate *Miller's Crossing*.

There are no gangsters in *That Night's Wife*, merely an impoverished father desperate for money to buy medication for his sick daughter. (The title, suggesting a one-night stand, is misleading.) Essentially this is a three-hander melodrama: the husband, the wife and the

tough but compassionate police detective who comes to arrest him. The action plays out over one night and, apart from the robbery sequence that acts as prologue, entirely within one set: the family's small, cluttered apartment. Ozu shows endless ingenuity in exploiting his claustrophobic setting, and makes sparing use of intertitles; the first dialogue title comes more than ten minutes into the action.

Ozu's dalliance with gangster movies didn't last long; *Dragnet Girl* is his last excursion into the genre, replaying story elements from *Walk Cheerfully* but in a more sombre mood that brings it closer to his American models. Again, a smalltime gang-leader finds himself attracted to a simple, virtuous girl, but this time it's her rival, the 'bad girl' of the title (the great Tanaka Kinuyo in an early lead role), who acts as his eventual salvation. As her boyfriend, Oka Joji has something of the soulful seriousness of the young Henry Fonda. Ozu himself scripted, under his Anglo-Japanese pen name of James Maki.

As with the student comedy set, the score is provided by Ed Hughes, though this time for a string quartet; the busy texture gets a bit relentless. Prints show some scuffs and blotches, but nothing serious. **S**

i 'Walk Cheerfully' screens at BFI Southbank, London on 22 April with a live benshi narration by Tomoko Komura and musical accompaniment by Clive Bell. The BFI members-only screening will be introduced by Tony Rayns

Television

O TEMPO O MORES

The 1960s culture show *Tempo* deserves to be remembered for its dynamism and willingness to embrace art both high and low

TEMPO: VOLUME ONE

ABC/ITV; UK 1962-67; Network DVD/Region 2 DVD;
300 minutes approximately; Aspect Ratio 4:3

Reviewed by David Thompson

By the beginning of the 1960s, one television programme stood as the acme of arts programming – the BBC's 'flagship' series *Monitor*. It was presided over by the avuncular Huw Wheldon, who conducted interviews in the studio and introduced films on artists and their worlds, all beautifully crafted in monochrome 35mm. Future film directors John Schlesinger and Ken Russell learnt their trade there and developed a personal voice. How was the relative newcomer of independent television to compete? The answer came in the shape of *Tempo*, launched in October 1961 with flamboyant theatre critic Kenneth Tynan as editor and presenter. It ran for eight years, outliving *Monitor*, but today is less frequently cited as a force in the transmission of culture through the small screen. Yet the editor of *Arena* Anthony Wall recalls the dynamic, fluid style and open-door policy of *Tempo* as a key influence on that very individual BBC arts series. Hence the importance of this (barebones) release of 12 *Tempo* films from Network, who hopefully will bring us more in future volumes.

As with *Monitor*, far less of the studio content of *Tempo* survives than the specially crafted films. The earliest example here is a sensitive, poetic look at the artist Graham Sutherland at work in the South of France, made by *Monitor* alumnus Peter Newington. Not everything was on this level; a studio-based rehearsal of Mozart's Clarinet Quintet featuring Yehudi Menuhin is painfully leaden, as the players politely and tentatively discuss technical points of balance and interpretation, most of which are hard to hear, let alone understand. Just as Jonathan Miller brought about a controversial sea change in *Monitor* when he took over in 1964, largely dropping Wheldon's big-game-hunt of great artists for an off-centre, handheld approach, so *Tempo* underwent an aesthetic makeover when Mike Hodges, future director of *Get Carter* (1971), *Flash Gordon* (1980) and *Croupier* (1998), arrived from Granada's groundbreaking current-affairs series *World in Action* to become series producer.

Already a new sensibility had crept into *Tempo* with the employment of art-school graduates, notably Trevor Preston (later the writer of such compelling crime series as *Out*) and James (later the film director Jim) Goddard. Inspired by his experience working with the Maysles brothers in the US, Hodges abandoned the studio and commissioned half-



Jacques Tati on the giant set of his magnum opus 'Playtime'

hour films to be shot on lightweight 16mm equipment. He found highly accomplished crews at a Canadian company established in London, Allan King Associates. As Hodges recalls, "The budget was only £2,000 for each programme. Out of that had to come the costs of shooting and the editing, but 16mm gave us much more access and freedom, even if we only had two days of actual filming."

He then inaugurated *Tempo Profile*, the choices here being a frank and direct interview with Harold Pinter (and featuring extracts from *The Homecoming* with its original cast), a sharp yet curiously evasive Duke Ellington, a wonderfully expansive Orson Welles ("all shot in an architect friend's flat below mine in Notting Hill") and a strikingly intimate look at the contrasted worlds of ballet dancer Lynn

It was a last hurrah of highly experimental films, resulting in disgruntled viewers jamming the ITV switchboard



Duke Ellington

Seymour and new pop sensation Tom Jones. This bold mix of what was then characterised as high and low art was a definite breakthrough. Next, Hodges devised a series he "laughingly" called *Tempo International*, with the majority of filming done in Paris. As Hodges explains: "I followed union rules and took a crew over there, camera and sound plus two assistants, and split them into two crews." There he covered most of his 'international' subjects, such as the charming portrait by director Dick Fontaine (another *World in Action* graduate) of Jacques Tati at work on his magnum opus, *Playtime*.

For Hodges, the real gear change came in 1967 with *New Tempo* (a title distinction not made clear on the DVD sleeve). It was a last hurrah of highly experimental films, resulting in disgruntled viewers jamming the ITV switchboard; amazingly, the programme's time slot by this stage was Sunday afternoon, just after lunch. "I was completely obsessed with Marshall McLuhan, it was such a freewheeling time, everything was breaking down, and you began to make extraordinary connections, which he was very adroit at doing." Theme-based films in a fast-cut essay format proved to be too much too soon. Frustratingly, the only example on this disc is the one programme banned from transmission, in which the simple action of man descending a staircase, drinking a glass of water and lighting a cigarette is filmed in various styles, each progressively weirder to underline an accompanying interview with psychiatric guru R.D. Laing on the use of LSD as a medical treatment. "They objected to him saying that taking LSD was like climbing the Matterhorn, that he wouldn't stop people doing it even if they fell off. We refused to cut the line." But did any of Hodges's team actually take LSD before filming? "I never asked." ☹

AGATHA CHRISTIE'S POIROT – SERIES 3

LWT/ITV; UK 1990-91; Llamenteol/Region B

Blu-ray; 632 minutes; Aspect Ratio 4:3

Reviewed by Sergio Angelini

By the time production concludes on the last of the Poirot stories this summer, it will be a remarkable quarter of a century since David Suchet first donned his absurdly curled moustaches and immaculate spats. If some of the more recent entries in the series have been either unnecessarily glum or overly camp, the early (and funnier) years of the show remain utterly delightful. Set in an ersatz 1936 in which art-deco furnishings reign, Lagondas trundle through the Home Counties and plummy accents proliferate, the show is greatly bolstered by the regular presence of Hugh Fraser as the kind-hearted Captain Hastings (easily one of the densest 'Watsons' in detective fiction), the ultra-efficient secretary Miss Lemon (Pauline Moran, adorned with immaculate kiss curls) and the grouchy but loveable Inspector Japp (Philip Jackson). With scripts by the likes of Anthony Horowitz, David Renwick and Andrew Marshall, and made under the supervision of Clive Exton, this third season sees the show at something like its most confident in its rich mixture of humour, crime puzzles and beautiful decor, most notably in an episode set in Broadcasting House. As a bonus it also includes a feature-length adaptation of *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, presenting the main characters in their youth at the tail end of the Great War.

Not available in HD in the UK, this Spanish Blu-ray release shares the same masters used for the US release but trumps those editions not only by being Region B but also by coming in at less than half the price.

Disc: The new Hi-Def masters are derived from the original 16mm camera negs and the results are mostly superb, with deep blacks, bold colours and ultra-sharp contours. There are no extras.

HOUSE OF LIES – SEASON 1

Crescendo/Refugee Productions/Totally Commercial Films/

Showtime; USA 2012; Paramount Home Entertainment/

Region 2 DVD; 356 minutes; Certificate 18; Aspect Ratio

16:9; Features: audio commentaries, featurettes

Reviewed by Sergio Angelini

This is a scabrous, fast-paced comedy about ethically unburdened professionals who lie, cheat and screw around before they even start knocking down to the daily office grind of bleeding their corporate clients dry – or at least, that's how management consultants are depicted on this show. Don Cheadle stars as Marty Kaan, the sharp and unscrupulous main asset of the number-two consultancy in the US; his nemesis comes in the long-legged shape of his drug-addled and permanently in heat ex-wife – who, to make matters even more challenging, just happens to head the number-one firm in town. The carnivalesque atmosphere is enhanced by Marty's self-mocking asides, which break the fourth wall to lay bare his crass and deeply damaged psyche while chiding all those around him as he travels round the country with his team of ultra-



Marriage Lines

This ultra-traditional studio sitcom benefits considerably from the assured playing of stars Richard Briers and Prunella Scales

bright mercenaries. Too predictably, the only humanity Marty displays comes when he's with his charming young son, who is experimenting with cross-dressing, or his increasingly forgetful ex-psychiatrist father (Glynn Turman).

Eventually the focus shifts away from shafting clients to company infighting as the fault lines in the upper echelons become increasingly deep and the retribution more public (Marty's boss gets even with him by defecating all over his office). Despite plenty of energy and Cheadle's charismatic presence, it's very hard to care what might happen after the predictable cliffhanger (a third season has been commissioned, however).

Disc: The anamorphic transfers are crystal-clear, as is the discreet audio. Extras are limited to a handful of cast and crew commentaries and disposable featurettes.

MARRIAGE LINES – SERIES 1 & 3

BBC; UK 1963/65; Acorn Media/Region 2 DVD;

442 minutes; Certificate PG; Aspect Ratio 4:3;

Features: new interview with Prunella Scales and Richard Briers, picture gallery, text biographies

Reviewed by Sergio Angelini

This ultra-traditional studio sitcom benefits considerably from an occasional twinkle in its

scripts and the assured playing of stars Richard Briers and Prunella Scales. In the opening episode, newlyweds George and Kate Starling return from their honeymoon to start their conjoined lives, but can't find the key to their new apartment. Thereafter their bliss will continue to be shortlived (they even fail in a plan to celebrate their first two consecutive weeks without a row). Kate stays at home and watches her soufflés deflate while George has a lot of trouble not being swayed by his louche unmarried friends, and marital discord is temporarily ensured by the appearance of old girlfriends and pregnancy ("They don't make that noise every night, do they?" he complains).

This set brings together all that remains of the show (the second, fourth and fifth seasons were junked), concluding in a pleasing circular fashion with a return visit from old neighbours Peter and Norah (Ronald Hines and Christine Finn) from the first year, allowing for some reflection on how times have changed.

Disc: The telerecordings are in acceptable shape though there are instances of fading and severe print damage. The main extra is a recent 20-minute interview with Briers and Scales that meanders affectionately and has an added poignancy after Briers's death last month.



One-hit wonder: Mae Murray's fame rests largely on her one big success, Eric von Stroheim's 1925 confection 'The Merry Widow'

DANCE LIKE A BUTTERFLY, STING LIKE A BEE

MAE MURRAY

The Girl with the Bee-Stung Lips

By Michael G. Ankerich, University Press of Kentucky, 392pp, £33.95, ISBN 9780813136905

Reviewed by Pamela Hutchinson

Anita Loos dismissed the first biography of Mae Murray as a sop to her ego, a "book-length Valentine". By contrast, her latest biographer warns that his book will "not always be flattering, but it [will] be fair". However, far from slaughtering his subject, this new, more clear-sighted volume looks set to reassess the stature of a dancer-turned-actress who was repeatedly mauled by the critics and whose fame rests largely on her one big hit: the Erich von Stroheim confection *The Merry Widow* (1925).

Still, Murray would be mortified by *The Girl with the Bee-Stung Lips*. Sympathetic as it is, Michael G. Ankerich's book exposes details she would rather have had kept under wraps – not

just her impoverished final years (bankrupt, alone, sleeping in Central Park and humming 'The Merry Widow Waltz' as she rode the bus) but, cruellest of all, her date of birth.

Like many a Hollywood star, but more so, Murray was sensitive and secretive about her age. Strictly between us, she was born in 1885, but would regularly lop a decade or more off her



Murray in Robert Z. Leonard's 'Fascination'

years, creating the distasteful impression that she was shimmying in the Follies while just a child. It was a high-maintenance fib requiring a facelift at the age of 35, faddy all-milk diets and close-ups that were filmed through so many layers of gauze that an MGM director sniped: "Mae was photographed through a blanket."

More elaborately, the former Anna Mary Koenig from the Lower East Side would romance her life story by telling journalists she had been raised anywhere from Portsmouth, Virginia to "European convents" or "at sea in a lovely boat". That first biography, *The Self-Enchanted*, was still too prosaic for Murray, who would swipe copies from library shelves and redact any offending facts and figures with a ball-point pen. One can only imagine the vicious emails she would compose to IMDb were she alive today.

Vain she was, and temperamental too, launching expensive lawsuits against everyone from movie studios to dry cleaners, with mixed success. And she knew how to make enemies. She once called Stroheim a "dirty Hun" on the set of *The Merry Widow*. Another time, in a

flounce, she announced her intention to leave Hollywood for Berlin, only to face a phalanx of bigwigs, led by William Randolph Hearst, threatening to boycott any films she made in Germany, rendering the gesture unprofitable, and backing her into a public U-turn.

As Ankerich patiently lays out, the tantrums may have been part and parcel of Murray's personality, but there were valid reasons for her insecurity and her desire to surround herself in a fairytale fiction. Even at the height of her box-office success, her reviews were terrible, with her awkward acting style condemned as "affectation-plus". Her brother blackmailed her, and her son, born clandestinely in Paris, was taken from her after a horribly mangled custody battle. Even her love affairs were largely disastrous, from the millionaire's son who was rendered penniless once his father learned he had shacked up with a showgirl to David, one of the Georgian "marrying Mdivanis" who passed himself off as a prince and, once they were wed, turned abusive and ruinously spendthrift. No wonder the poor thing plaintively asked a reporter: "Why can't we shape life to suit us instead of allowing life to shape us?"

No one could fail to sympathise with Murray

Murray was vain and temperamental, launching lawsuits against everyone from movie studios to dry cleaners

when, having hit the big time on Broadway, she was lured to Hollywood by Adolph Zukor's false promise not just of a plum role in a new film but of a red carpet and brass band to greet her from the train. She was instantly miserable, only hitting her stride when she briefly found artistic and romantic compatibility with director Robert Z. Leonard. The Murray school of acting, which drove Joe Public wild and was wickedly mimicked by Marion Davies in *The Patsy*, was to purse those famously pert lips, throw back her chin and dazzle audiences with showy dance steps, a translucent costume and often a two-strip Technicolor showstopper. In *The Merry Widow* she followed the formula to the letter but something – perhaps Stroheim's direction, or the closeness of the prince-and-showgirl plot to her own experience – made it a rare critical triumph too.

So, while Murray may rock in her North Hollywood grave at some of Ankerich's painstaking research, he presents the vulnerability and the talent of his subject with affectionate clarity. We learn that when Murray returned to the stage, her write-ups improved. Her dancing was "timeless"; she moved "gracefully and alluringly"; there was something attractive about her that the screen just couldn't capture. While it's a testament to her career that her slinkiness is preserved in *The Merry Widow*, perhaps make-believe Murray just wasn't built for the glare of Hollywood, but the footlights of Broadway instead. **S**

DAN GRAHAM

Rock My Religion

By Kodwo Eshun, Afterfall Books, 105pp, £9.95, ISBN 9781846380860

Reviewed by Paul Tickell

Partly because of rights issues involving use of music and of clips from films like *Rebel Without a Cause*, artist Dan Graham's 'video essay' *Rock My Religion* is not often screened. It's very welcome, then, to have a book which, illustrated with over 50 images from the film, is almost an edit-by-edit account.

Kodwo Eshun is some intellectual hellhound trailing Graham as he traces the spirit of early 1980s American punk bands like Black Flag back to a manifestation of the Holy Spirit in a Manchester of the 1770s in the throes of the industrial revolution and of the ecstatic dancing of the radical Protestant Shakers. Their holy rolling is read by Graham as both a resistance to the rocking rhythms

of industrialisation and a harbinger of the vinyl roll to come. It's a bold thesis also to be found in the work of Greil Marcus and Nick Tosches, though Graham, a rock writer too, seems unaware of the latter's *Hellfire* book in which "the God of the Protestants" and rock 'n' roll shake up Jerry Lee Lewis.

In the 200 years between 18th-century Shakers and late-20th-century pogo-ers, Graham lays bare a secret history involving Rimbaud, the Sioux Ghost Dance, The Doors and Patti Smith. Eshun constantly grounds the director's visionary discoveries at the technical level, paying attention to how a graphic, a disconcerting sound mix or a piece of Glenn Branca music affects the film or homing in on how the 'O' mouthed by Patti Smith in some archival material sets off a series of associative edits involving industrial machinery, turbines and the repetitive circularity of capitalist production itself (the 'Piss Factory', as her song has it).

God is in the detail and, as Eshun demonstrates, this is why *Rock My Religion* rocks. **S**

JAPANESE CINEMA IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano, University of Hawaii Press, 2012, £39.95, 178 pp, ISBN 9780824835941

By Jasper Sharp

A more apt title for this analysis of trends in Japanese film over the past 15 years or so might have been 'Japanese Cinema in the Transition to the Digital Age'. Considering the country's historical renown for technological innovation, the switchover to digital cinema exhibition has lagged surprisingly behind other industries. As of 2010, only 980 of the nation's 3,412 screens (29 per cent) were equipped for digital projection (against the UK's 37.8 per cent), while the latest count of 88 per cent (against the UK's 92 per cent) shows there is some way to go before the dream of a celluloid-free exhibition sector is realised.

However, as elsewhere theatrical exhibition now counts as only one of several channels

through which audiences consume domestic product. Mitsuyo Wada-Marciano argues that, taking account of figures for home-viewing formats, appetite for local output is as high as it was in the 1950s heyday of Japanese cinema. Furthermore, though 35mm has remained the dominant exhibition format, digital production technologies have liberated a new generation of filmmakers while offering more choice for audiences: more than 400 domestic films are released annually in Japan. While cinema attendances have not risen dramatically, the rise in screens due to the growth in multiplexes has led to a "prevalence of independent films with their low-spectacle and personal narratives, which are thoroughly compatible with the diminished size of the screen".

Wada-Marciano focuses on how this has influenced the types of films produced, through case studies including international breakthrough J-horror titles like *Ringu* (Nakata Hideo, 1998) and *Ju-on: The Grudge* (Shimizu Takashi, 2001), whose visual forms and narrative structures self-referentially acknowledge the global distribution patterns and viewing environments brought about by new media; the rise in home-grown animation from solo industry outsiders such as Shinkai Makoto and Yamamura Kôji; discourses surrounding the digital authenticity of *jishu eiga* (self-produced) documentary productions such as those by Kawase Naomi, and their stylistic influence on arthouse features such as Koreeda Hirokazu's *Nobody Knows* (*Dare mo shiranai*, 2004); and the challenges to notions of 'Japaneseness' brought about by the transnational character of new technologies.

While a little sketchy on both industry and technical detail at times, Wada-Marciano's academic survey provides a valuable and insightful starting point for future researchers. **S**



Silver screen: Nakata Hideo's 'Ringu'

ABRAHAM POLONSKY: INTERVIEWS

Edited by Andrew Dickos, University Press of Mississippi, 230pp, £42, ISBN 9781617036606

Reviewed by Nick Pinkerton

"It has been remarked that with a little opportunism the characters I created in *Body and Soul*, *Force of Evil*, and *Tell Them Willie Boy is Here* could have adapted and survived. And so, with a little opportunism, we all can."

This is Abraham Polonsky in 1970, coming around to his experience with the Hollywood blacklist, which had terribly curtailed his filmmaking career. A survivor if not an adaptor, Polonsky was nearing 60 by then, and his sophomore directorial effort, the revisionist Western *Willie Boy*, had been released only a year earlier, a long-delayed follow-up to 1948's noir classic *Force of Evil*, starring John Garfield. Along with the 1947 boxing picture *Body and Soul*, directed by Robert Rossen from a Polonsky script, "a folk tale from the Empire city" also starring Garfield and also made for the actor's own Enterprise Studios, these three films make up the Polonsky canon – and constitute a convincing argument for Polonsky as a major filmmaker.

Polonsky brashly speaks for himself in this collection of the director's interviews and essays for the University Press of Mississippi's ongoing 'Conversations with Filmmakers' series. Born to a socialist-leaning Russian-Jewish family in 1910, Polonsky recounts a childhood spent between the Bronx and Manhattan's East Side; his father was a pharmacist, like Garfield's character's father in *Body and Soul*. Before eventually migrating into movies, the unusually well-rounded Polonsky taught English at the City College of New York, wrote his own novels as well as radio plays for Orson Welles's *Mercury Theatre*, served overseas during the war in the Office of Strategic Services, and finally settled into Hollywood, the scene of his rapid rise and even faster fall.

As another meteoric career played out – that of Senator Joseph McCarthy – Polonsky refused to go through the public degradation ceremony that would have cleared his name of suspicion of Communist Party membership. Polonsky was blacklisted until 1968 when, after years of working incognito, he finally had another official screenplay credit, for Don Siegel's *Madigan*. Notwithstanding his principled stance, Polonsky comes across here less as a starry-eyed utopian than as a moralist exhausted by human shortsightedness, prone to statements like: "You can interpret everything that one person does for another as a way of destroying him." His compromised characters, each locked in their private prison, can only see the other guy's bars. "We have committed ourselves to courses of action which are folly and disaster," Polonsky says. "All along the line, we invent choices which we think are real but are just cover-ups." Perhaps even more to the point: "People live a long time, and act badly very often."

That last statement appears twice in this slim volume and isn't the only repetition. When talking about the blacklist, Polonsky's responses to questions settle into form answers, some of



Man with a movie camera: Abraham Polonsky was blacklisted until 1968 for refusing to testify to HUAC

which recur verbatim. Only in the collection's last interview, a 1997 conversation with the authors of 2001's definitive biography *A Very Dangerous Citizen: Abraham Lincoln Polonsky and the Hollywood Left*, does the very elderly Polonsky's weary, philosophically detached facade finally crack, letting the vitriol leak. (On Rossen, who named names: "He was talented like Elia Kazan was talented, but like Kazan he also had a rotten character. In the end they both became stool pigeons.")

Those whose backs were broken by the system, however, earn his respect. Of Garfield, who died of a heart attack at 39 while being harassed by the House Committee on Un-American Activities, Polonsky famously said "he defended his streetboy's honor and they killed him for it". In the same 1962 interview, included here, it's made clear that Polonsky considered himself true to the

Polonsky comes across here less as a starry-eyed utopian than as a moralist exhausted by human shortsightedness



Classic noir: 'Force of Evil'

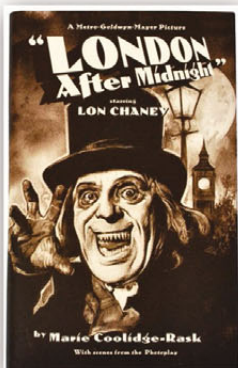
neighbourhood and its ethos throughout his life. Asked about the influence of playwright Clifford Odets, he replies that "we both derive from Jewish jokes and street quarrels. I live dangled between the formal and the argot without solution."

A spot-on self-description, and in these pages there's testimony to Polonsky's assertion that "you can recognize my style as a writer whether I'm writing essays or something else." The collection begins with examples of Polonsky's critical writing from the likes of *Hollywood Quarterly* (immediate predecessor of *Film Quarterly*). A theoretical blueprint for Polonsky's film practice, these not only prove that he was the rare example of a wholly self-conscious and articulate Hollywood artist, but echo the voice of his 40s screenplays in their urgent, almost haranguing cadence, the staccato delivery, the rhetorical repetitions.

Much of Polonsky's writing addresses the problem of "mastering reality" on screen, singling out for praise the "tag of daily experience" or "scraping presentness" where he finds it, while elsewhere dressing down Carol Reed's *Odd Man Out* for its assumption of universal rather than specific truth, which reduces it to "a stereotype of realism in the literary form of a melodrama".

Of particular interest is Polonsky's side-by-side analysis of Chaplin's *Limelight* and Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*: "just about the same story, the tale of an old man who was once supreme in his field whom time has weakened and circumstance faced with a test of strength and philosophy. Both heroes affirm and do not alter their vision of life." And while Polonsky, losing his prime years, was robbed of any chance of supremacy, here it is amply demonstrated that this was a filmmaker of intense, obsessive and corrosive vision. **S**

Read



LONDON AFTER MIDNIGHT

By Marie Coolidge-Rask, The Imaginary Book Co, 200pp, illustrated, hardback, €40
A 1920s pulp novelisation is the sort of book you'd expect to find with a cracked cover at a collectors' fair rather than lovingly republished as in this tactile, tantalisingly limited edition of Marie Coolidge-Rask's novelisation of Hollywood's first (and now lost) vampire movie, Tod Browning's *London After Midnight* (1927). A family melodrama and murder mystery with a detective story as its central mechanism, the text revels in the tropes of Gothic literature. The pages reverberate with howling banshees, screaming maids and the clatter of a black cat knocking over saucepans in the chaos of a household descending into panic. A fascinating oddity, presented with a new introduction, stills from the film and an obituary of its star, Lon Chaney.
<http://theimaginarybook.com>

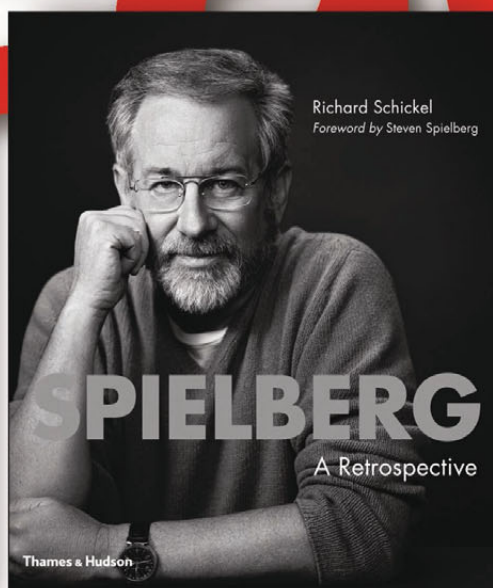


INDIE 2.0

Change and Continuity in Contemporary American Indie Film

By Geoff King, I.B. Tauris, 288pp, paperback, £16.99, ISBN 9781848853171

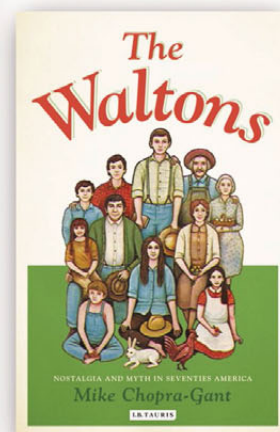
What is the state of American indie cinema in the second decade of the 21st century? Geoff King explores new opportunities for indie films, including the use of low-cost digital video and the pursuit of the internet and social media as alternative means of funding, distribution, promotion and sales. Other detailed case studies focus on the ultra-low-budget 'mumblecore' movement; the social realism of filmmakers such as Kelly Reichardt and Ramin Bahrani; the 'digital desktop' aesthetics of Susan Buice and Arin Crumley's *Four Eyed Monsters*, and crossover hits such as *Little Miss Sunshine* and *Juno*.
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SPIELBERG: A RETROSPECTIVE

By Richard Schickel, Foreword by Steven Spielberg, Thames & Hudson, 280pp, illustrated, hardback, £24.95, ISBN 9780500516089

Impeccably designed and illustrated with more than 400 superb images, many sourced specially from the Steven Spielberg Archive, this book celebrates more than 40 years of Spielberg's boundless energy and unwavering commitment to excellence in all areas of his work. Written by the distinguished film critic Richard Schickel, it is an essential companion to the art of making movies and an authoritative tribute to a Hollywood icon. "A brisk, glossy, insightful film-by-film study containing fresh interview material, an easygoing tone and rare pictures... Terrific stuff." *Empire Magazine* "Excellent... a remarkably candid and smart study." *Cinemart*
www.thamesandhudson.com



THE WALTONS

Nostalgia and Myth in Seventies America

By Mike Chopra-Gant, I.B. Tauris, 232pp, paperback, £19.50, ISBN 9781848850293
The Waltons was on TV screens through the socially and politically volatile period when Nixon-era America was confronting the impending withdrawal of troops from Vietnam. As Mike Chopra-Gant demonstrates in this fascinating book, the show expressed a wider nostalgic desire in its audience to return to traditional conservatism and paternalistic family values at this time of political crisis. He examines its deployment of key myths and its vision of family as distinct from such alternative TV depictions as *The Addams Family*, *The Simpsons* and *The Sopranos*. He also explores the show's powerful representation of three generations of men and its strong women, who are nevertheless domestic heroines.
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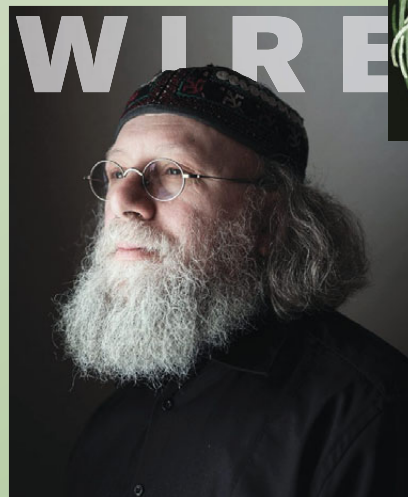
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CRÍA CUERVOS



The last minutes of Carlos Saura's 1975 film capture the mood of Spain on the verge of freedom from the grip of Franco's regime

By Mar Diestro-Dópido

Inspired by the idea of making a film about a killer little girl, Spanish director Carlos Saura ended up creating probably the most lauded film of his career, the masterful *Cría cuervos*, shot in 1975 as the Spanish dictator of 36 years, General Francisco Franco, was on his deathbed. In the film's first few minutes we meet the supposed killer – ten-year-old Ana, played by Ana Torrent with the same mix of tenderness and intense inquisitiveness she brought to Víctor Erice's *The Spirit of the Beehive* (*El espíritu de la colmena*) two years earlier. Ana and her two sisters (Irene older, Maite younger) are about to spend their summer holidays locked in the family house after their father – a cruel womanising stalwart of the regime, whom Ana has always held responsible for her mother's death – dies of a heart attack while having sex with the wife of his best friend.

Except Ana believes that she in fact killed him, using the mysterious powder her mother once told her to get rid of because it contains "a poison that could kill an elephant" – in reality old bicarbonate of soda. Instead, Ana hid it away, adding it to her father's drink the night he died. When the mistress leaves terrified, Ana gets the glass from the room and proceeds to wash it carefully to erase any trace; and after gently being told off for being awake at such a late hour by the ghost of her mother (which she can invoke at will), she goes to bed. In

another murder attempt that will resonate at the end of the film, Ana will use her 'poison' once more, this time against rigid conformist Aunt Paulina, Ana's mother's sister, now in charge of the girls in their parents' absence.

Produced by Elías Querejeta and filmed in beautifully evocative 1970s Eastmancolor, *Cría cuervos* is a metaphor for the demise of Franco's claustrophobically patriarchal regime, and its ending sets out the questions and contradictions that this would inevitably bring. The film itself can be read as an act of resistance, replicated in Ana's own rebellion against those trying to repress her (family, social conventions, etc) – for, as the Spanish saying goes: *cría cuervos y te sacarán los ojos* (raise ravens and they'll pluck out your eyes). In other words, what you've created will destroy you. Franco's legacy of death, violence, repression and fear had been profoundly ingrained in the next generation – an idea made explicit by having Ana's mother and Ana herself, when she's shown later as an adult, both played by an exquisitely ethereal Geraldine Chaplin.

Echoing the 'murderous' opening scene, Saura sets the film's last three minutes on the morning of the girls' first day back at school, when Ana wakes up to disappointment, discovering that she has not only failed to dispatch Aunt Paulina but can no longer evoke her mother's spirit either. Over breakfast, Irene narrates her previous night's dream,

It's shot through a bittersweet realisation that a country being freed from its captor would need a long time to heal its wounds

in which she was kidnapped and threatened with death if her parents didn't answer the phone. As the camera follows the girls out of the house and into the street, Irene continues in voiceover, "So they said, 'The time has come to kill you.' They tied me to a wooden column. They put a gun to my temple, and just when they were about to shoot, I woke up."

To the tune of a deceptively uplifting, phenomenally catchy pop song whose lyrics paradoxically speak about abandonment and loss – 'Porque te vas' ('Because You Are Leaving'), played here for the fourth time in the film – we see the girls leaving their enclosed environment on their own for the first time. But this is only a liberation of sorts. As they walk in single file down the bustling, sun-kissed streets of Madrid, their serious countenances reveal not happiness at escaping their summer confinement, but resignation as they walk towards yet another repressive institution, the school. Their heavier demeanour is in contrast to the explosion of energy of the other uniformed children, into which multitude they blur as the camera pulls back and up to pan over the rest of the city.

Like the song, the ending of *Cría cuervos* is shot through with a bittersweet realisation: that a country on the verge of finally being freed from its captor would need a long time to heal its wounds and exorcise its ghosts. In the words of another dissident Spanish filmmaker, Luis García Berlanga (*The Executioner*): "We were free, but we did not know it yet: we had not yet tasted freedom, we had only intuited it." The past would haunt the present for many years to come. ☹

i 'Cría Cuervos' is released by the BFI in a dual-format DVD and Blu-ray edition on 13 May



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